



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

KOORONA





600073538W





57



KOOROONA.



1000



K O O R O O N A :

A TALE OF

South Australia.

BY I O T A.



Oxford :

A. R. MOWBRAY & CO.

London :

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.

1871.





PREFACE.

IN writing a work on any subject, more especially perhaps on a new country, it is absolutely necessary, in order to give a true and correct statement, to be quite sure that what is written is fact, and not conjured up by the imagination of the writer.

One who is disposed to be sceptical, and on whose mind the incidents of life have impressed the conviction, that in every case, it is needful before forming an opinion, to understand both sides of a question ; one who is gifted with great powers of observation ; one who knows that it is as easy to err in judging one's friends as one's enemies ; one who understands the meaning of the word *prejudice* from seeing in others the evil effect of indulging in it, and shuns it himself as he would the plague, may be fortunate enough to write what is worth reading, though deficient in many of the qualities which must be combined to make a great writer.

To a certain extent, however, the most unprejudiced must be influenced by circumstances, and therefore it is that so many fail in conveying to others a just idea of a distant land, its climate, its inhabitants, with their manners and mode of life. Moreover they often omit minor details, which, whether on canvass or in a book, give life to the picture.

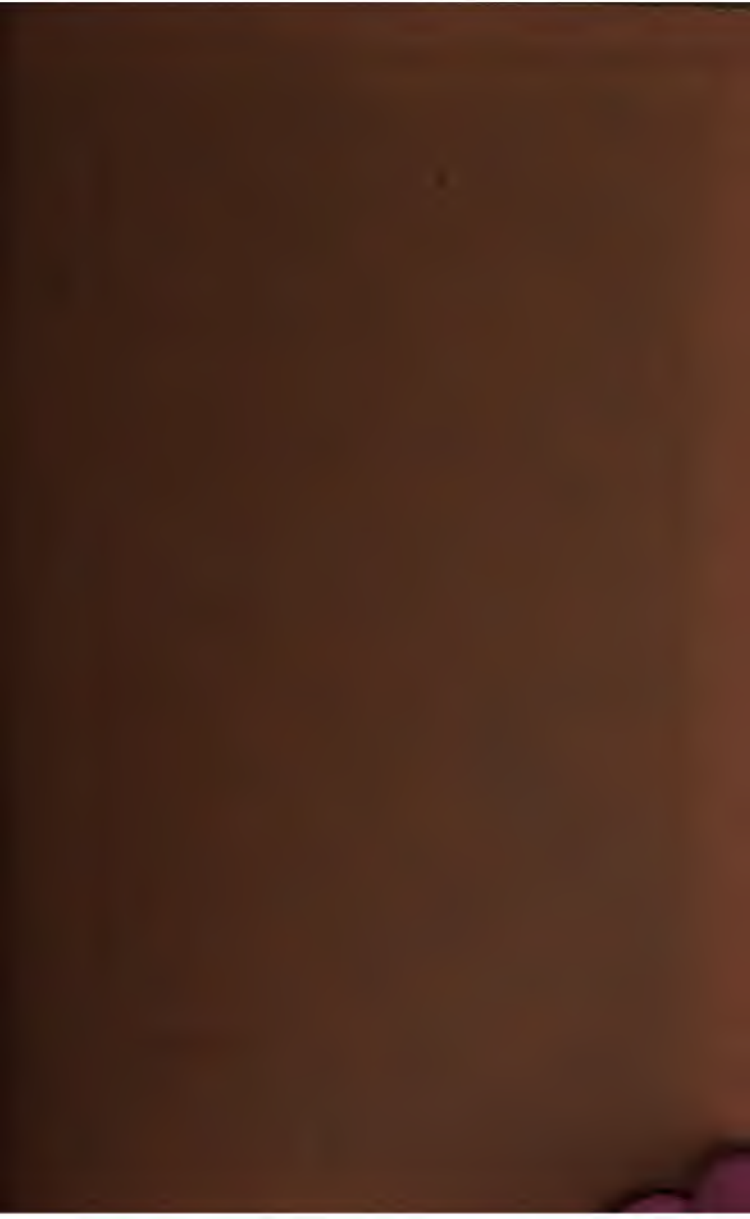
It will be readily granted that in a country peopled as Australia is, few, comparatively, are in a position to write of it correctly. Most of the inhabitants are uneducated. They possess no knowledge but of the most elementary kind. They left England, Ireland, Scotland, or Germany, poor; the majority of them, young. Their recollections of home are all associated, if not with actual poverty, at least with a want of many of the comforts and all the luxuries of life. In the station in which they were born they remained, until they landed in Australia, and there by industry, perseverance, or fortunate speculation, they raised themselves to a higher level; they have all that wealth, and the influence which accompanies wealth, can give them,

and who can wonder that they see everything connected with the country of their adoption *colour de rose*, or be surprised at their making statements in accordance with the view presented to their mental vision?

When these persons go home, they leave a warm, southern land for the colder region of Great Britain; they quit a numerous circle of friends, rich and prosperous like themselves, and the occasional companionship of some of those who had, by reason of their birth and education, occupied a good position in their native land. Some may have held high office under Government, which gives them patronage and occasions their being sought after, and it is quite natural that they should feel elated, that their notions should rise as they have themselves risen, and that they should regard themselves as equal or above those, who, in point of wealth and influence, may be below them, though their superiors in all besides. It is *natural*, for few to understand the greatness of humility. They visit their native land; find their early companions dead, or what seems worse



600073538W



57



KOOROONA.







CHAPTER I.



EARLY in November of 186—, the steamer from Melbourne entered Guichen Bay. A lady in deep mourning was on deck. A casual observer might have thought that she was attentively gazing at some object of interest which the shore presented, but a closer one would have been aware that she saw none of the beauties around her. The narrow channel of deep water which it is only safe to enter in calm weather,—

the brilliant pomona green which earth and clouds and sun had combined to give to the waters of the bay,—the rich crimson seaweeds floating in them, were alike lost upon Mrs. Vernon. The mind's eye was fixed upon other scenes, and the present had given place to the past so entirely that she started when a boy of sixteen laid his hand on her shoulder, and said,—

“Isn't this a glorious bay?”

“Really, Harry, I have not looked at it.”

“Not!” exclaimed the boy, “and you cannot have been star-gazing, seeing that there are none visible, so what have you been looking at during the last quarter of an hour?”

“Scenes in which Australia forms no part, Harry,” and she drew her black shawl closely

round her tall, slender figure, and slightly shuddered.

The merry smile which danced in Harry's eyes and played about his mouth when he asked the question, which elicited so grave an answer, was gone in a moment.

"You are not cold, mamma?" he said, as he put his arm round her.

"No, I was shrinking from the future, I think."

"Don't think about it, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.' You see, mamma, I am quoting one of your own lessons."

"It is a good one to remind me of. Where are Isabelle and Edith?"

"Nursing Mrs. Brown's baby in the cabin. The animal chooses to squall this morning. I hope the weather won't get into the same state before we are in open sea again, or we shall not reach Port Adelaide at the time we hoped to do."

"Why; what have we put into this bay for; and what place is this?"

"It is Guichen Bay, one of the most dangerous places to stop at between Melbourne and Adelaide, —but it is worth seeing. Look, mamma, at its narrow entrance. We are surrounded by rocks, you can see that they are close to the surface in every direction. Here and there they crop out and shew themselves. The tide is in now, or we should see more. 'There,' pointing to a ledge of rock, "are the remains of one wreck, and you can see part of another on the opposite side. But look," continued the boy, eagerly, "how clear the water is, you can actually see the white sand at the bottom."

"Yes," and gazing round, Mrs. Vernon added,

"it is a beautiful bay, but why are we here? I understood when we left Melbourne that we were going direct to Port Adelaide."

"All I know is that the captain wanted to call here. Ah! he is just putting off in a boat."

"Tell your sisters to come on deck, Harry. It is so calm and bright that I do not like their being below."

And as the boy moved away, Mrs. Vernon turned and looked at the beach. Rising slightly, with here and there a sudden elevation of white sand in some grotesque form, and covered with the peculiar kind of low, stunted brush-wood that is a distinctive feature of the sea beach on the southern side of the Australias, it presented a novel appearance to an eye accustomed to the varied richness of coast scenery in the old world.

"Here's a row," exclaimed Harry, entering the cabin just as the baby before mentioned, set up a shrill cry; "What on earth is it all about?"

"Nothing, only it is cross," said Edith.

"I believe it is not well," remarked Isabelle.

"Can't you give it to its mother? She'll quiet it," and Harry moved off impatiently.

"Poor Mrs. Brown is worse to-day than she was yesterday."

"Well,—mamma says you are both to go on deck."

Edith and Isabelle looked at each other, and then at the baby, and lastly at the cross-looking stewardess.

"Poor little thing! Take it, Edith, and I will go and speak to mamma."

Isabelle bounded up the stairs, and in a moment was at Mrs. Vernon's side.

"Mrs. Brown is still in bed, the baby won't sleep, and the stewardess is cross."

"And that combination of circumstances places you in some difficulty, Isabelle. Is that what you mean, dear?"

"Yes, mamma. Harry said you wished me and Edith to come on deck. We wanted to come before, but you told us we must not venture to nurse that poor little baby except in the cabin. It is not well, I am sure, and that woman is so cross—"

"That you do not like to leave the baby to her tender mercies," interrupted Mrs. Vernon.

"She shakes it if it cries," said Isabelle.

"Get me a warm shawl, and I will see what I can do with the child here."

Isabelle ran down to the cabin.

"Edith, mamma will nurse baby," and she darted off for the shawl, while Harry exclaimed,—

"There is an end of my fishing, which I thought to have while the captain is on shore."

"Why?" asked Isabelle, looking back.

"Because that child's squalling will frighten all the fish in the bay."

"Harry, my boy, don't speak in that way. I never heard a child cry as this is crying now, unless it were in pain."

And Mrs. Vernon, who had followed Isabelle, took the baby in her arms. She looked at it attentively and the expression of her countenance changed. Edith noticed the change.

"Is it really ill, mamma?"

"I am afraid so. I wish we had a doctor on board."

"What a queer face it made then," said Harry.

"Hush," replied Mrs. Vernon, "it is slightly convulsed."

"Is it going to die do you think?"

"I hope not; it cried so loudly a few minutes ago that I think there can be no immediate danger, but convulsions are always more or less dangerous. Something must be done immediately. Stay—I will speak to Mrs. Brown first," and entering the ladies' cabin, she said quietly,—“I am sorry you are not able to rise to-day, Mrs. Brown.”

"Ah! I was not well when I left Melbourne, but my husband was so anxious for me to join him and to see baby, who is just a month old to-day, ma'am, that I thought I would not stay for another week. But I wish I had now. The doctor said I was not fit to come, and if it wasn't for your daughters, ma'am, I don't know what I should do. I can't raise my head from the pillow or do anything for my baby, and she has been crying just as she did a week ago."

"Was anything the matter with her then?"

"Yes, she had convulsions. The doctor said before I left, he thought the attack had passed off, but that I must watch her carefully."

"And what did he prescribe?" asked Mrs. Vernon, anxiously.

The sick woman attempted to rise, but fell back on her pillow.

"Is my child ill?"

"I fear so. Tell me quickly what the doctor's directions were, and I will attend to them."

"I don't know what medicine he gave, but he ordered her to be put in a warm bath. Please, ma'am, bring her to me."

"After the bath," said Mrs. Vernon. "Try to keep calm now. I will do everything that can be done, as if it were my own."

Isabelle was looking frightened, as Mrs. Vernon, without stopping to speak to her, or to look at the child, passed rapidly through the cabin. Soon she returned, and taking the child in her arms, was at no loss to account for Isabelle's alarmed look. A dark hue had settled round the little mouth, and the eyes were turned upwards.

"Run, Edith, and hasten the stewardess. That poor woman must not see her child in this state. Go to her, Isabelle, and tell her I am undressing it to put it in the bath."

"Can I do anything, mamma," said Harry, who was wishing to himself that he had not said so much about squalls.

"Yes; keep those boys quiet, they are making a terrible noise on deck; and tell the steerage passengers that Mrs. Brown is very ill and her child also, and beg them to be as quiet as possible."

Isabella returned to her mother, while she was still holding the infant in the water.

"Mamma," she whispered, "Mrs. Brown will have her baby, but she speaks so strangely, I think she does not know what she says."

"Go," said Mrs. Vernon, turning to the stewardess, who, now that her feelings were roused, was anxious to do all she could, "go and try to calm her; she is feverish; tell her that the child is quiet now and more comfortable, and that I will bring her to her as soon as she is out of the bath."

When Mrs. Vernon entered the ladies' cabin carrying the child, who now, composed and tranquil, was apparently sleeping, she found Mrs. Brown much excited, but the sight of her baby resting quietly in Mrs. Vernon's arms calmed her imme-

diately, and after looking at it for a few minutes, without, however, making any effort to take it from Mrs. Vernon, she sank into a heavy sleep.

Mrs. Vernon sat down on a low seat, laid the child on her lap, and telling the stewardess she would send for her when anything was wanted, she dismissed Edith to join Harry on deck, motioned to Isabelle to sit beside her, and prepared for a long watch. As the mother and daughter sat side by side a stranger might have taken them for sisters. Mrs. Vernon had married when very young; Isabelle was nearly as tall as her mother, and had the same slight figure and oval face, the same deep set grey eyes and long dark lashes, long slender neck and finely formed head. Isabelle looked like one on whom the sun had shone, and soft showers had fallen only to refresh and invigorate. The rosy cheek told of health and the smooth young brow of peace and happiness, while the pale cheek of the other, and a faint contraction of the delicately pencilled eyebrows, spoke of care and sorrow. The dark brown hair of each was drawn in plain bands from the face; but Isabelle's fell nearly to her waist in heavy curls, free as her own spirit; her mother's was confined in a Grecian net.

Half an hour passed away and Edith looked in, but Mrs. Vernon raised her finger to enjoin silence, smiled, and nodded to her, and the child was gone again.

"Will you go, Isabelle? You can do nothing here now," said Mrs. Vernon in a low voice.

"Yes, I can do something. I am doing something that I like better than all else,—staying with you."

Mrs. Vernon kissed her cheek, and bent her head forward to look at the infant on her knee.

"How pale she is!" exclaimed Isabelle, as the shawl was drawn aside.

"Yes,—and that fallen lip,—I am afraid she is not sleeping but insensible. What can we do?"

Isabelle started up.

"Hush! keep still, Isabelle;" and Mrs. Vernon looked towards the berth in which Mrs. Brown still lay in a deep sleep. "It scarcely breathes."

"Oh, mamma! can nothing be done?"

"Nothing that I know of."

Another half hour passed, and Mrs. Vernon rose with the little lifeless form in her arms, looking round as if for some place where she might lay it down, and scarcely daring to move lest she should wake the sleeping mother, before she had time to think how best to break to her the tidings of her child's death. After a moment's pause she laid it in her own berth, threw a shawl over it, and taking Isabelle with her, she briefly told the stewardess what had occurred, and begged her to stay and watch Mrs. Brown while she went on deck.

"Harry, has the captain returned?"

"No. How is the child?"

"Dead."

"Does Mrs. Brown know?" asked Edith, looking up with tears in her eyes.

"No; and I am almost afraid to see her wake; her mind wandered a little before she fell asleep. How long are we likely to be detained here?"

"I don't know," said Harry, "something is wrong it appears; part of the machinery out of order. Nothing but what a smith and a few hours' work will put right," he added, seeing his mother look anxious, "and the man is at work now."

"A few hours, Harry, did you say? It is two

o'clock now, and it has been so very calm and still to-day that it will be wonderful if we do not have one of those sudden changes which everyone says are so common in these regions at sundown ; we could not get out of this bay in rough weather."

"No ; the captain would not attempt to go ; but if it continue calm we shall not stir from here till to-morrow, unless we can start in time to get clear of the rocks by sunset."

Two hours later in the day the captain returned.

"By five o'clock we shall be off," he said, in answer to an enquiry from Mrs. Vernon. "How is Mrs. Brown, now?"

"Still asleep."

"Had we not better dispose of the child's body before she wakes? What do you think, ma'am? It must be done before we reach the port."

"I think not ; it would be too dreadful for her not to see her child again."

"It shall be just as you wish," replied the captain, "but I thought it might be the best plan ; one does not know what state she will be in when she does wake."

"No ; let that decide the next step."

A few hours later, and Mrs. Brown was raving with all the wildness of delirium. Nature, in striking contrast to the workings of that fevered brain, was at rest ; the sea smooth and unruffled ; a dark cloud appeared on the horizon, but above, all was clear—a deep blue vault spangled with countless stars. From a glorious crescent rays of light streamed down and rested on the water. A solemn silence reigned on board the solitary vessel. Then the captain's voice was heard in prayer ; the words, "We commit her body to the deep, in sure and

certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ," fell on the listening ear ; the waters of the great deep parted for a little moment, and then closed over all that remained on earth of little Ruth Brown.

"That's an ugly cloud, captain," said one of the sailors.

"Yes, we may get ready for a rough night."

And a wild night it was. No one thought of sleeping ; all nature was awake. The thunder roared and the lightning flashed ; the wind and the waves seemed to be striving for the mastery, and man, in his little barque, was bravely weathering the storm.

"Mamma," said Edith, raising her head for a moment from her mother's knee, where it had been resting since the storm commenced, "do you think we shall be drowned ? I did not like to see the baby let down into the water."

"No, dear ; but *she* was not there. The spirit had returned to God Who gave it, and the little form, in which it dwelt for one short month, is resting quietly in its ocean bed. The angry waves which threaten us do not reach that ; body and soul are where the storms of Time cannot harm them."

Just then Harry looked in at the door of the cabin.

"Don't be frightened, mamma, the captain says we have plenty of room to knock about in ; it is a wild night, but he saw the storm coming long before it burst, and steered straight out to sea."

"The gale is blowing towards the shore, is it not ?" said Isabelle.

"Yes, and it is blowing hard ; but the sailors, as

well as the captain, say we are all right, and I came to tell you. Go to sleep all of you if you can. Is Mrs. Brown any better?"

"She is quieter. I was obliged to tell her that her baby was dead an hour ago; she was getting so excited, because, as she thought, we were keeping it from her. She has scarcely spoken since; perhaps she guesses the rest."

When morning dawned, though the violence of the storm had subsided, the waves ran high and the steamer was far out of its course. On the morning of the second day, however, she entered St. Vincent's gulf, and in a few hours' anchored at Port Adelaide.

"Oh, mamma!" exclaimed Isabelle, "what a wretched looking place."


"Not nice looking at all," replied Mrs. Vernon, "but do not let us complain, Isabelle. We are here; we came to endeavour to carry out dear papa's wishes, and we will make the best of everything. The first thing for all of us to do is to make up our minds that we shall meet with much that is entirely new and strange to us, and different to what we have been accustomed to, and much, no doubt, that will seem very disagreeable. If we do this it will prevent many disappointments."

Just then a little bustling man came hurriedly on board, enquiring if a Mrs. Brown and her child had come in the steamer.

"Poor man! I will speak to him," said Mrs. Vernon; and in the gentle words which some women know so well how to use in hours of sorrow, she told him of the death of his child and of his wife's illness. "I believe she is in no danger now; get her home as quickly and as quietly as you can,



CHAPTER II.

“  O this is the best hotel in Adelaide,” exclaimed Harry, as Isabelle joined him in a small sitting room, the next morning. “Queer looking place; very different to even the small hotels in England.”

“Yes, but mamma says everything seems to be nice and comfortable.”

“As for that I am no judge. I could have slept on the floor last night. You know, Isabelle, mamma is always contented.”

“And you will be, too, won’t you, Harry?” and a small white hand was laid on the boy’s shoulder.

“Mamma! are you there? I didn’t know. About being contented—yes, I am quite content—ready for anything—I am in a very jolly state of mind. How are you?” he added, kissing her cheek. “You look pale.”

“Do I? I don’t feel very bright: but now for breakfast. I shall be better presently.”

“And what are we to do first?” enquired Harry, cutting away at a ham before him, without thinking of what his hands were doing.

“Harry, who is to eat all those slices of ham?” asked Mrs. Vernon, smiling.

“Oh!” dropping the knife and fork, “I forgot what I was about. Never mind. Here, Isabelle,

are two nice thin slices for you. I will go in for some of these thick ones. I am as hungry as a hunter. Where are we going this morning, mamma, and what shall we do ?”

“I had not quite decided, but I think you shall take these letters to Mr. Graham and Mr. Watson, and your sisters and I will wait here till you return.”

“You only know Mr. Graham slightly, mamma ?”

“No I never saw him but once, and that is many years ago. The impression he made on my mind was a very favourable one.”

“Why did he leave England ?”

“Not for the same reason which decided your papa to try his fortune in Australia. Mr. Graham was, I believe, fond of travelling ; and when a boy at school he used to say that as his father and mother were dead, and he had nothing to keep him in England except one uncle, he should see as much of the world as he could, if his uncle would let him go.”

“Which it appears his uncle did, as he is here,” said Harry, helping himself to another slice of ham.

“He did not wish him to go, but seeing his mind bent upon travelling, he allowed him to follow his own inclination.”

“Did he come here at once ?”

“No ; he travelled in different parts of Europe, and then went to America. After staying there some time he returned to England, and soon after, his uncle died, leaving him nearly all his property. It was then I saw him. He did not stay long in England.”

“Left it for Australia. I don’t admire his taste,” said Harry.

"He is a rich sheep-farmer now; you may some day be one, too."

"North Adelaide, is his address, I see," said Harry; "he cannot always live in town."

"Probably not."

"This other—this Mr. Watson, you do not know at all."

"No; Captain Douglas thought that an introduction to him may be of use to you in some way, as he is at the head of some large establishment here, as well as agent for several wealthy colonists, and as you are aware, Harry, he asked his son to give us this letter."

"I can't make out how Mr. Douglas knew him. Old Watson lived in a queer way."

"He was a commercial traveller, I have heard," said Mrs. Vernon, "and saved enough to enable him to live, during the last years of his life, in the cottage where he died."

"How did Douglas know them?"

"I think through some connection with this Mr. Watson's first wife."

Harry was silent.

"Shall I tell you what you are thinking about, Harry?" said Mrs. Vernon.

The boy coloured as he raised his dark eyes to his mother's face, and tossing back his nearly black hair from his forehead, he replied, "If you can."

"You were asking yourself, 'Why should my mother and my sisters have anything to do with people in Australia, whose nearest relations were in a different position to their own in England?'"

"Well, mamma, you are a kind of witch in reading my thoughts, but you know everyone told us there was a vast number of snobs here, and that they

were the people who were at the head of affairs, and you should be careful in forming acquaintances."

"So I intend to be, Harry. I have neither the means nor the inclination to go into what is called society."

Harry laughed.

"No, mamma. You would not be understood if you did, if all is true that the Altons told me, and they had *moved in the best society* (I believe that to be the correct phrase) for five years."

"They told us of a great many nice people, Harry," remarked Isabelle.

"Yes, of course; but they were like the flowers in our gardens, after papa lost all his money and we had to do without our gardeners, almost lost among weeds. I hate snobs." And Harry, pushing his plate from before him, got up and walked to the window.

"Harry, I want to speak to you, come here."

He turned at the sound of his mother's voice, and in another moment had thrown himself down on the floor beside her.

"Well, mamma," and he took one of her hands and brought it round his neck and over his shoulder, where he held it; "I am a prisoner now."

"Guilty, or not guilty?" said Mrs. Vernon.

Harry did not speak.

"What did we come to Australia for?" pursued Mrs. Vernon.

"Because papa would have come if—" and Harry paused for a moment; then continued, "and you thought he would have wished you to come on my account, that I might do something better for my sisters, as well as for myself, than I could do in England."

"Yes, you are right, and having come voluntarily to live here, we shall all feel in time that there are duties to others to perform. At present our course is very plain and simple. There must be a beginning, and it will not do for you, my dear boy, to be thinking too much of mamma's dignity. I dare say you will find these snobs, as you call them, very good and estimable people in their way, and—"

"Oh, very likely," broke in Harry, rather impatiently, "and it does not matter to me what they do. The airs which Jack Alton told me they give themselves towards those who are poor, as we are now, are insufferable and very vulgar; but I should only laugh at them if I were here by myself, or rather I should make myself scarce."

"Which I shall do for some time to come," said Mrs. Vernon; "don't trouble yourself about me and your sisters."

"It was of you and Isabelle I was thinking; as for Edith, she will do very well when she gets a few years older. She has a spice of the— I beg your pardon, mamma. I mean she will be perfectly unapproachable; coarse vulgarity and purse-proud assumption must retire before her; she will draw a magic circle round her, and woe to the snob who steps over it. Won't it be jolly to watch you, little Edith?"

"What for, Harry?" said the child, who had been trying to make friends with a pair of beautiful shell parrots, and heeded nothing that was said, and she turned her head over her shoulder as she spoke, shewing her large dark eyes and arched eyebrows, which were as strongly though more delicately marked than her brother's were.

"Nothing," said Harry, laughing, "never mind

me, pet," and Edith turned to the birds again, as he continued, "I interrupted you, mamma."

"I was going to say, my dear Harry, that you had better wait, and as you grow older, form your own opinion from personal observation. I do not venture to say positively, that the Altons were mistaken in the estimate they formed of the people here, generally, because I have no means of judging; nor am I likely to have, as I do not mean to form any acquaintances in Adelaide, beyond Mr. Graham's family for some time to come; but the Altons may have been a little prejudiced, I think."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because they are naturally proud and rather fastidious; but we will not discuss this point farther just now. It is time you started to find Mr. Graham."

There was deep love, mingled with some anxiety, in the gaze which Mrs. Vernon fixed on Harry, as he left the room, and for a few moments she lost sight of the past and present, and suffered her thoughts to wander into the future. All was dim and shadowy, and as she thought of the young, warm, ardent spirit that had just quitted her, having to travel on into that future's unknown depths, endure its trials, and battle with its temptation, she would have shrunk from it, but for the unfailing promises of the God of the fatherless. Mrs. Vernon was no idle dreamer. She felt with the noble-minded American poet that,—

"Life is real! life is earnest!"

and that her duty was to

"Act,—act in the living present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!"

"Edith, my child, come here," said Mrs. Vernon,

as Harry left the room, "what are we to do with all this black hair?"

"It won't curl without any trouble, mamma, like Isabelle's, it never would at home, you know, and it is so hot here."

"Well, come with me and I will plait it for you."

"Thank you, dear mamma," said the child, when the plaiting was completed; "I feel so much cooler now it is all out of my way. May I go to the birds again? I think they will soon know me."

Edith had just completed her thirteenth year. She was two years younger than her sister, and was a striking contrast to Isabelle, whose classical features were generally in repose; while Edith, all enthusiasm and excitement, was rarely quiet for five minutes together; and her short upper lip gave indications of a proud spirit, which, unless kept in subjection by judicious training, might some day mar an otherwise fair character.

Two hours had scarcely elapsed when Harry returned.

"Mr. Graham seems to me to be a brick, mamma; he said all sorts of kind things. I expect he will be here with Mrs. Graham in about an hour, and he won't hear of your staying at the 'York.' We are all to go to his house at once,—that is, if you will consent."

"He is very kind; I must think about it. Did you see Mr. Watson?"

"Yes; and he will do himself the pleasure of bringing Mrs. Watson to call upon you, as soon as his numerous and important engagements will allow him to do so."

Harry repeated this in an important tone, and Isabelle, who had been listening, said—

"Harry does not like Mr. Watson."

"He isn't a brick, I know," remarked Edith.

"Edith, don't copy Harry in everything; little girls should not talk like boys. Besides," continued Mrs. Vernon, "Harry cannot have seen enough of Mr. Watson to know whether he likes him or not."

"Yes, I have. He is one of those small men" (and Harry, who was promising to be at least six feet high, drew himself up) "who always remind me of the frog in the fable, 'Extensive prospects are seen through small openings,' and if that man, small in stature, does not imagine himself a great man in many respects, I am mistaken. The smile that accompanied the condescending remark that he would call upon you was of the most patronising character."

"I wish you would not judge so hastily, Harry."

"Well, mamma, I know you will think just as I do, only you will keep cool,—get colder, in fact, if Mr. Watson shows an intention of patronising you, while the bare idea makes me hot. I was warm enough when I reached the house, but I got warmer in Mr. Watson's cool rooms; he has a capital house; his rooms are ten degrees cooler than these. But here are the Grahams; they have just got out of the carriage you saw driving up."

Mr. Graham was one of those men whom to look at was to trust. He was not handsome, indeed his features were plain, but he looked every inch a gentleman, and he was one in the true sense of the word. Honourable and upright in thought and feeling, his acts could not be otherwise, for a man's character is what his thoughts make it, and his life is but the embodiment of his thoughts. All respected him; his friends loved him. There are some men and women who pass through life without meeting with friends,

and these people generally have a large circle of acquaintances who surround them in the day of prosperity, as the moths on a warm summer night flutter round the flame of a candle ; but if clouds arise, and the storm of adversity sweeps over the sunny scene, they vanish and are no more visible. Friends and acquaintances are two very different things. A friend is something tangible, real, the substance, in short ; an acquaintance but a shadow ; and a man who lives without the former probably possesses none of those qualities which would render him capable of being a friend himself. Mr. Graham had married a woman who could appreciate his sterling worth, and who was herself deserving of the love he bestowed upon her and the entire trust he reposed in her.

As they entered the room, Mrs. Vernon rose to meet them. Not a shade of colour relieved the marble paleness of her face ; her feelings were too deep for her to appear otherwise than calm. When she last saw Mr. Graham she had not long been married, and was surrounded by all the comfort, elegance, and luxury which an ample income would secure in her native land. Mr. Graham was less outwardly calm than she was for the first few moments, and to cover the feelings which the sight of his early friend's widow and children had aroused, he energetically commenced scolding her for not going to his house immediately, and said he felt almost disposed to regard her not doing so as an affront. It reflected upon his character ; he was an Englishman although he did live in Australia, and he hoped he had not forgotten what hospitality meant.

Mrs. Vernon smiled, but before she could reply Mrs. Graham, who had kissed Isabelle and still held

Edith's hand, said, "And when, Frank, do you mean to introduce me to Mrs. Vernon?"

"Bless me! I forgot you were there, Kate. Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Graham; and there's my young friend Harry; he is as like poor—he is a very fine boy, Mrs. Vernon."

"You will make him vain, Mr. Graham."

"No, I shall not; no doubt he has a great many faults, as we all have; my own boy has plenty, and I tell him plainly of them, and shall take the same liberty with Harry when we are better acquainted; correct and encourage by turns, that is my plan. And these are your girls, dear Mrs. Vernon," and he took a hand of each. "Kate," turning to his wife, "I know you have an engagement this morning which you cannot postpone, and I have an appointment at one. Will you arrange with Mrs. Vernon when we shall send the carriage for her, while I make friends with these young strangers," and as he spoke he placed a chair for Isabelle, and, sitting down on one close to her, he drew Edith to his side, putting his arm round her, and asked them a few questions about the voyage. This led them to tell him of Mrs. Brown's illness and the death of her baby, and so kind was his manner that they forgot they were talking to one they had only seen for the first time within the last quarter of an hour.

"I am sorry, my dears, that I have no girls to help to amuse you and make you feel at home," he said, as he rose to go.

"Thank you, but you have Mrs. Graham, and she—"

Isabelle suddenly paused, and a bright blush mounted to her cheeks, as she withdrew her gaze from Mrs. Graham's face, on which her eyes had been fixed.

"And she what?" enquired Mr. Graham, smiling and looking at his wife who, without uttering any of the common-place remarks that always greet the ears of a new arrival, which mean nothing, and are as tiresome as they are absurd,—without asking Mrs. Vernon how she liked the colony,—what did she think of Adelaide?—did she find the hot winds very trying, &c., &c., and then exclaiming 'Oh! I forgot, you have only just arrived'—Mrs. Graham told her how pleased she was to see one she had often heard her husband speak of, and begged her to pay them a long visit, it would be such a real pleasure if she would; and as she spoke, the kindness and sincerity which dictated the words were so visibly expressed in her face that Mr. Graham saw in a moment what Isabelle meant, and as she did not immediately reply, he said—"You think Mrs. Graham will do instead?"

Isabelle, still blushing, looked up at him with a pleased smile, and said, "Yes," in a frank, open way, that seemed to please Mr. Graham amazingly. Turning to his wife, he said—

"Kate, this young stranger has read your character in your face as quickly as I did; she has already been commenting upon it."

"Oh! Mr. Graham!" exclaimed Isabelle, "indeed—"

"There was no harm, my dear Mrs. Vernon, in anything your daughter has said or done," said Mr. Graham quickly, as Mrs. Vernon cast a surprised look on Isabelle. "Her opinion of my wife was only made known to me by the utterance of two words, a look and a blush; Mrs. Graham and my own penetration did the rest."

"Quite a pantomime," said Mrs. Graham laughing; "and how is it to end?"

"Mrs. Vernon has to decide that. I hope you have persuaded her to come to us this evening."

"Not this evening," replied Mrs. Vernon, "but to-morrow. There was not much persuasion needed. There were but two ways (for me at least) of replying to an invitation given as Mrs. Graham's was,—to decline the pleasure of acceding to her evident wishes on the subject, for some strong reason which I had not, or to accept her invitation as freely as it was given."

"Then it is all arranged as it should be. At what hour shall I send the carriage and Kate, for I know she will wish to come for you, as there will be room. My friend Harry can sit on the box."

"I think it must be in the afternoon, as I am expecting our luggage from the port sent here."

"By-the-bye, who is seeing to that for you?"

"A man named Brown, a storekeeper."

"What ! the husband of the poor woman you have been telling me about, Isabelle ? You see I speak to you as my old friend's child."

"Yes."

"Then she is an old servant of ours. Poor thing ! She lost her baby, Kate, on board the steamer coming from Melbourne."

"And was it buried at sea ?"

"Yes."

"How dreadful ! I must go to see her. She was my housekeeper at Kooroona, one of our sheep-runs, for some years, and one of the most faithful servants I ever had. It was strange that you should meet with her, Mrs. Vernon."

"Kate, my time is up, and yours, too, I think. I was going to propose," he continued, turning to Mrs. Vernon, "sending one of my servants to the

port to see after your boxes, but if Brown has promised to do so he will, he is to be depended on. I will send a cart here for them to-morrow evening. Harry, my boy is looking forward to seeing you," he added, as he shook hands with him. "He is about your age, I fancy, but not like you in anything except height,—blue eyes, light hair ; he looked such a thorough Saxon when he was born that we had him named Alfred."

"What a pretty name ; I like it," exclaimed Edith.

"So do I," said Mr. Graham ; "it reminds me of freedom and liberty, combined with lawful authority and kingly power exercised for good, and fifty other things ; but why do you like it, my little Norman ?" and he passed his hand over her dark hair.

"I am not a Norman ; I am an English girl, and I don't like Normans."

"Why ?" said Mr. Graham, much amused.

"Because they were cruel to the Saxons. I read a tale not long ago about the last Saxon earl—such a good man, and William the Conqueror had him killed only because he was a Saxon and the Saxon people liked him. It was wicked and mean."

"I think you must read that tale to me, Edith, and we will talk about it. Now good-bye till to-morrow."





CHAPTER III.



ON the morning of the second day after the conversation related in the last chapter, Mr. Watson took his usual seat during business hours, and commenced looking over some papers that were lying on the table before him. Suddenly some thought seemed to strike him, and putting his hand into one of his pockets he drew out a note, read it, and then walked out of his office and up-stairs.

Mrs. Watson was sitting in a lofty, well-furnished room, with her work basket before her, and one or two children were playing on the floor near her, when Mr. Watson entered with the note in his hand.

We have simply spoken of Mr. Watson as being manager of a large establishment, and as an agent, but this was by no means all that he was, or that he thought he was, or that he felt he ought to be. He was a justice of the peace, and in many respects he faithfully and judiciously performed the duties of the office; at the same time it must be acknowledged that his peculiar temperament having induced some thoughtless, but acute observer of public characters, to make the probably correct, but, of course, very improper remark, that "the little J.P. had been weaned upon pickles," it

was thought by some persons that his being a justice of the peace, under such circumstances, was rather paradoxical. He was eminently what may be called a public character, for his name was constantly in print. His commentaries on the course of events, public and private, were as voluminous as those of Julius Cæsar, or of Napoleon himself, on that hero of the remote past.

Not the least fortunate move which Mr. Watson made in the progressive and spirited game he had played in Australia, was giving check-mate to the daughter of a fine old veteran, whose appearance always suggested the idea to thoughtful persons, "What on earth did he come to Australia for? Why did he leave the old world?" The lady did not avail herself of the privilege of retiring, and no doubt thought that the time would come when she would have her revenge for the bold move which had placed her in check ; so the knight captured the queen, and they were married, and lived very happily ever afterwards.

During this digression, Mr. Watson had been standing with one elbow resting on the mantel-shelf, apparently absorbed in thought. Perhaps the letter in his hand had carried him back in imagination to past days, and the review suggested the idea that his wife's family might not quite like to hear of his antecedents, should these new arrivals of whom his letter spoke, refer to them. Not that there was anything of which Mr. Watson need feel ashamed, rather the reverse, for he had gained a good position in the new world, by his own merits and exertions, and well deserved to retain it. Let him who wins the laurel wear it. But Mr. Watson was quite aware that persons of gentle blood have

certain prejudices difficult to set aside, and which are rarely overcome entirely; and all he had considered it necessary to say about his family to his friends in Australia, was, that his father, though not rich, had an independent income. This fact and his own position made him appear no unsuitable aspirant for the hand of the portionless Jane Malcolm, and of course it was very natural to wish that no unlucky contretemps should interrupt the even tenor of his way, or ruffle his domestic peace. A few minutes reflection decided him what course to take, and that settled, he said,—

“Jane, it is two days since this note was left; you were out at the time.”

“What note is it?”

“It is from an old friend of mine in England, the son of the old naval officer you have often heard me talking about.”

“Oh! but how did the note come? The mail is not due for a week.”

“No, young Vernon brought it.”

“And who is young Vernon? I know no one of that name.”

“All I know is that he has come to Australia with his mother and two sisters, and Douglas has given them a letter of introduction to me. From what little he says about them, I gather that Mr. Vernon had some serious reverse of fortune before he died, and that his widow and children are in reduced circumstances. I do not see how I am to be of any use to them. If I took young Vernon into the office, his salary at first would only be just enough for himself; but we must call upon them, Jane.”

“Yes, certainly; it would not be kind not to do

so. Shall we go this morning? It must be very sad to be in a new country and among strangers."

"Yes, I can spare half an hour this morning; but you had better not invite them to come here. It is impossible to tell what sort of persons they are. Very queer people come out here, as you know, Jane."

"Yes; but surely, George, your friend would not give a letter of introduction to anyone who was at all objectionable. He would not know them himself, for I have often heard mamma say that in England there is such a decided line of demarcation between the different classes of society. Wealth here is a passport to any society, but it is not so in England."

Mr. Watson thought for a moment before he replied to this last remark. He had made up his mind to the course he would pursue, and when he had once done that, he never allowed anyone or anything to turn him aside. He never was known to change his opinion, he regarded doing so as a weakness, excusable in a woman, but entirely beneath him.

"I have thought the matter over during the last two days, and I have arrived at the conclusion that on every account it will be better to be just kind and civil and nothing more."

"But will it be kind to make a formal call on a stranger and a widow, and extend no hospitality to her? I do not think that I should think so," urged Jane.

"It will be the most prudent. At any rate I have quite decided that it will never do to ask them here. Once get them into the house and there may be great difficulty in getting them out of it again."

What was it that reminded Mr. Watson as he said this that he was saying what was not likely to happen; nay, that there was no possibility of its being allowed to happen, however far he extended his hospitality? Conscience reminded him of the frank, noble bearing of Harry Vernon, and of the heightened colour and haughty, cold "Thank you," which followed Mr. Watson's announcement that he would call on Mrs. Vernon.

Mrs. Watson saw that it was useless to say more, and indeed her liege lord and master gave her no opportunity of doing so, for muttering something about business he walked towards the door.

"I shall be at liberty to go with you, my dear, at one o'clock," he said, as he closed the door.

Mrs. Watson was always careful not to keep her husband waiting when he had made an arrangement to go out with her, and she was standing at one of the windows expecting him to join her before starting to "The York" to call on Mrs. Vernon, when a carriage, drawn by a pair of spirited greys, stopped at the door, and immediately after Mrs. Dashwood was announced. Mrs. Dashwood was handsomely dressed in the height of fashion, and as in stature she was considerably above the middle height, it might be said that she and her dress were a good match.

"You were going out, I see, so I won't detain you," were her first words, spoken in the quick, abrupt way which seemed to be partly natural to her, partly assumed as being dashing and distingue.

"I am going out presently with Mr. Watson, but pray sit down until he comes, he may be detained half an hour."

"Oh, I can't stay half an hour; I have such

a number of calls to make. We know so many people, and they are always telling me of not going often enough to see them, but of course persons in our position can't always do as we like ; as it is, Johnson does nothing but attend to the horses and drive me out ; what with a round of morning calls, and then having to be ready to receive Oswald when he comes from the House, and take us out again in the evening, his time always seems to be occupied."

Mrs. Watson did not see very clearly that there was any connection between her remark and the rambling reply of Mrs. Dashwood ; but that was not an unusual thing, for Mrs. Oswald Dashwood thought of nothing but herself and what ministered to her imaginary self-importance, consequently she and her belongings were generally the subjects of her conversation.


"How are the children?" Mrs. Watson enquired.

"Oh, they are very well. I have got new masters for them for music and drawing, and they are learning to ride ; we want them to ride well. I took Emma and Lucy to Government House the other day ; Sir James and Lady Digby take a great deal of notice of them."

"They are very kind and affable to everyone, I think," replied Mrs. Watson.

"We are going to dine at Government House to-morrow," pursued Mrs. Dashwood. "I suppose we shall not meet you. It is just a friendly party ; the Governor wants to talk to Oswald about something, I fancy."

"No," said Mrs. Watson quietly ; "we have promised to spend to-morrow evening with the Haughtons."



Mrs. Dashwood's countenance fell slightly. The Haughtons, and several other families who were intimate with them, were some of the early settlers in the colony, who, occupying a good position at home, had given it up for a vision of fabulous wealth and luxury in South Australia. Disappointed in their expectations, they continued to live in the colony, first, because they had lost the means of returning, and could not regain what they had given up at home, afterwards, because, as the colony progressed, they saw that a new country presented better opportunities of acquiring wealth than an old one; and that, though fortunes were lost instead of being doubled or trebled as they had anticipated on their first arrival, they were to be made in Australia by patience and perseverance. Many of these old colonists retained the exclusive feelings which they inherited from their forefathers, and no amount of ingenuity on the part of Mrs. Dashwood had hitherto enabled her to gain the entrée to their houses. It made no difference that Mr. Dashwood had the prefix of Honourable attached to his name as a member of the Ministry,—that he and Mrs. Dashwood frequently dined at Government House,—that he was wealthy and she outshone everyone else in the grandeur of her apparel,—they would not visit them, and the Dashwoods felt it bitterly. In many instances, there is no doubt that the purse-proud insolence and vulgar assumption of the Dashwoods were the cause of their not being admitted as ordinary acquaintances at houses where they were most anxious to visit, for Mr. Dashwood was a clever man, and a useful member of the House of Assembly. He had raised himself from a low position to a high one, and if in

his exaltation he had remembered that "before honour is humility" he would probably have attained his wishes, and that which was denied, when pompously claimed, would have been accorded voluntarily to his real merit. Unfortunately, too, for him, he had a vain, foolish wife, who cared for nothing but fashion and display, and who, though tolerably well educated, was so unmistakeably deficient in all that characterises a really lady-like woman of refined feelings, that she was generally disliked even by those who attended her large soirées and balls.

During the short silence which followed Mrs. Watson's last remark, Mr. Watson entered the room hat and gloves in hand, and Mrs. Dashwood rose, saying as she shook hands with him—

"What a stupid man that is that attends to the door at the House. I told Oswald the other day I would call for him, and drove up as usual, and the man came to the carriage door and asked what I wanted. 'You know what I want,' I said; I was so provoked with him. 'Tell Mr. Oswald Dashwood I am here.' He knew what I drove there for without asking, but he is so stupid. Good morning, Mrs. Watson; when are you coming to Morton? You haven't been there for ever so long."

"My time has been a good deal occupied lately with mamma who is not very well just now, and in about a fortnight I am going to take the children away from the heat and dust of Adelaide for the summer."

"Well, I shall be glad to see you when you can come. Are you going to the flower show to-day?"

"I think not."

"I shall just call in. Lady Digby will be there, I believe."



"The fruit and flowers are supposed to be the objects of attraction, are they not?" said Mr. Watson.

Mrs. Dashwood, quite unobservant of the irony which was as manifest in Mr. Watson's manner as in his words; replied, "I suppose so, but I never care for seeing those things except on my own table. Good-bye; I hope you'll enjoy yourself in the country. I want Oswald to take me to Melbourne."

"Mrs. Vernon cannot be more objectionable than Mrs. Dashwood," said Mrs. Watson, as she walked with her husband towards the York Hotel.

"I see what you are still thinking of, Jane; but you will oblige me by not inviting Mrs. Vernon to visit you now. You will soon be leaving town. Mrs. Vernon may not remain in Adelaide, in which case it would not be worth while to commence an acquaintance so soon to be broken off again."

Mrs. Watson, though not convinced, said no more, and just then her attention was arrested by a lady in deep mourning who was seated in a plain, handsome carriage drawn up before one of the principal jewellers' shops in Rundle Street.

"What a lovely face,—but so grave!" was her involuntary exclamation. "Who can she be, George? I never saw her before; and that is the Graham's carriage."

As she spoke, Mrs. Graham, followed by two young girls, came out of the shop, and the striking resemblance which the tallest of the two bore to the lady who had elicited Mrs. Watson's remark suggested the idea that they must be nearly related.

Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Watson exchanged a passing "How d'you do," as the former waited while her young friends got into the carriage. They were

acquainted slightly, for the Watsons visited extensively and generally. They were admitted by the "upper ten," as the phrase is, and chose to visit many who did not move in that exalted orbit; while the Graham's, who cared more for quiet home happiness and enjoyments than for visiting, bestowed little of their time upon anyone whom they did not really like and esteem; and this often led those, who did not know them well, to regard them as proud exclusives.

"One does not often see that style of beauty here," said Mr. Watson as they walked on.

"No, indeed. It must be a lovely specimen of the beauty I have heard mamma mention as prevailing among the upper classes in England. Perhaps we may meet her at the Haughtons' tomorrow night, as she is a friend of Mrs. Graham's."

"Very likely," was all Mr. Watson said, for he was wondering to himself whether the strangers he had just seen could be the Vernons. The hasty glance he had of the youngest girl reminded him momentarily of Harry.

"Is Mrs. Vernon at home?" he enquired of a waiter at "The York."

"No." Waiters and other dignitaries of that class, male and female, do not say "sir," or "ma'am," in Australia, as a general rule. Occasionally one meets with an exception, which is rather refreshing to those who have been accustomed to the respectful bearing of the domestics in a well-conducted English household. "No, she's gone two days ago."

"I thought—I understood she was staying here?"

"So she was. She came one day and went away the next; that is, she was here two nights

and one day. Anything else I can do for you? I'm being called,—gen'lemen have hard times in this country. I'm coming,—go on."

The latter part of this address was spoken to a boy, who was standing at one end of a passage with a pair of boots in one hand, and a basket of vegetables in the other.

"All serene," said the boy, and as he passed out of sight he commenced whistling "The Rat-catcher's Daughter."

"Did Mrs. Vernon leave any address?" enquired Mrs. Watson.

"Any what?"

"Her address."

"Not as I knows of. I'll call the chambermaid if you want to know about that."

"You mistake my meaning," and Mrs. Watson felt very much inclined to laugh; but knowing the extreme ignorance of those who in emigrant returns are set down as domestic servants, when they would be more appropriately designated domestic nuisances, and that the little knowledge they do possess is so homæopathic in quantity and quality as to prevent their surmising that they are deficient in anything,—knowing also that as a consequence of this delusion they imagine that they know everything, and are not to be laughed at or "put upon," she contrived to look serious, as she enquired,—
"Did Mrs. Vernon say where she was going?"

"Not in my hearing, but Mrs. Graham came and took them all away in her carriage, so maybe you will find them at her house."

Things appeared to be taking a different turn to what Mr. Watson expected, and he began to think that for once in his life he might possibly have

made a mistake ; but to admit the possibility of such an event, even to his wife, was so entirely out of his line, either in theory or practice, that he kept the idea to himself.





CHAPTER IV.



“**N**OW, young people,” said Mr. Graham, towards the close of the morning meal; “what is to be done to-day, and where shall we go? I mean to give myself a holiday and you shall do what you please with me.”

“Hurrah!” exclaimed Harry, who was as much at home with the Grahams, as if he had known them all his life instead of for a few days. “Mamma, will you come?”

“I think not. Mrs. Graham has asked me to accompany her to the Port to see how Mrs. Brown is.”

“We will go there to-morrow,” said Mrs. Graham, “if you prefer joining Mr. Graham’s party.”

“I should prefer doing so, certainly,” replied Mrs. Vernon, “but I think it will be better to deny myself the pleasure. I should not like to leave this part of the country without enquiring personally after that poor woman.”

“You speak as if you were going away immediately, my dear Mrs. Vernon,” said Mr. Graham, “but I hope it will be a long time before you begin to think of leaving us. I am sure Alfred won’t approve of any sudden move that will deprive him of his new friends, to say nothing of Kate and myself.”

"I do not think I had any definite idea of going or staying, when I spoke," said Mrs. Vernon, with a faint smile. "The words were rather the result of a feeling which sprung up and has been gaining strength during the last few years, the feeling that if I put off for my own pleasure anything which it is right to do, and that I have an opportunity of doing, I may not have the opportunity given to me again."

"Mrs. Vernon and I shall go to the Port, so, Frank, you and the young people make your own arrangements."

"Very well, Kate. Now where shall we go? To Brown-Hill Creek or Tea-Tree Gully, or to the Botanical Gardens, or—"

"What is a gully?" enquired Edith.

"A very ugly name for a valley or a ravine; for both are called gullies here, indiscriminately. There are a great number of them in that magnificent range of hills which you all admire so much, some of them very narrow, the rocks on either side precipitous and dangerous for an inexperienced climber; others wider, with small mountain streams running over a rocky bed, till they reach the top of a bold escarpment, a perpendicular wall of solid rock, over which they fall into a natural basin, and then on the streams flow for another mile or two, and again fall over the ledges of rock to a lower level, and so on, till they reach the Adelaide plains."

"Are there many wild flowers growing by the streams?" enquired Isabelle.

"Yes, during the winter. Several different kinds of everlastings, white and yellow, grow there luxuriantly, and in the gully through which what is called the Green Hill Creek flows, there are eight or ten varieties of ferns. In that gully, too, there are

several gardens. Indeed the Germans, who seem to be fond of growing fruit and flowers, have quite a little settlement there."

"Let us go there, Mr. Graham, when mamma can go with us."

"A very good suggestion, Isabelle; then suppose we go to the gardens, to-day, and I will introduce you, Edith, to some kangaroos and an emu. You were admiring the skin of one yesterday."

"And look, Edith, at that vase, the dark green part is an emu's egg," said Alfred.

Breakfast being over, Alfred reached down the flower vase from its stand, that his young friends might examine more closely the curious and beautiful egg of this celebrated Australian bird; and soon after the little party separated. Mr. Graham seemed to be in his element, as, taking the reins from his servant, he drove from the door, bent on giving pleasure to others. An hour later found Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Vernon seated in a railway carriage and on their way to the Port.

"Have you quite decided that you would rather not dine at Mrs. Haughton's this evening," enquired Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, indeed, excuse me, dear Mrs. Graham. For several reasons I must decline going anywhere; but I shall feel that I am a great restraint upon you if you do not go."

"Do not think that. I often wish I had an excuse, that my friends would think a good one, for staying at home; but to tell them that I prefer my own home and the companionship I find there, to any I meet with elsewhere, would neither be kind or pleasing to them. We are not misanthropes, but North Adelaide is a gay place and most of the people

are fond of visiting. So are we in moderation, but my own home is too happy for me to wish to leave it almost every evening in the week. You see, when I decline an invitation it will be more to please myself than on your account."

"It is well that you and Mr. Graham do not shut yourselves up too much. You would be too great a loss to society."

"I don't know that, at least so far as I am concerned. Frank of course would be missed."

"And you, too," said Mrs. Vernon. "Do you think anyone is without influence?"

"I suppose not. Frank thinks very seriously of the results of individual influence. I have heard him say that every action of our lives exercises an influence for good or evil."

"It is a solemn thought," said Mrs. Vernon.

"It almost frightens me," continued Mrs. Graham, "when I think that if Frank is right every word and act of mine have directly or indirectly made an impression on the mind of Alfred,—an impression never to be effaced, which must appear in evidence for or against me at the last great day. It is a fearful responsibility to give birth to that which can never die."

"Yet how few seem to realize it!" exclaimed Mrs. Vernon.

"Not many, I am afraid. I am sure I should not have regarded every action of my life in the serious light that a knowledge of the immortality of thought casts upon it, if Frank had not been what he is. It is a great source of happiness to me to know that Alfred thinks there is no one like his father. It would make me miserable to see him like most colonial boys."

"Do you think colonial boys are different to English boys?"

"I am sure they must be from what Frank says. The boys here are no sooner out of the nursery than they begin to smoke and express their opinion on every subject, use slang phrases, speak of their fathers as 'the governor,' and, in short, I believe Australia might very aptly be called 'Young America.' When you have been here twelvemonths you will know that we have but two seasons—summer and winter. Whether that has anything to do," she continued, laughing, "with the sudden transformation of babies into young men and women I don't know, but there are no children like yours in Australia."

"Then I am very glad," said Mrs. Vernon, "that we are likely to live in the Bush, far away from these fast young people."

"But you are not going into the Bush yet."

"The sooner the better, on every account, after our plans are decided and the necessary arrangements are made. I had but one object in bringing my children to Australia, and that I intend to keep steadily before me. Though my husband said little, I saw that he felt bitterly the reverse of fortune which made him decide upon emigrating. It was not so much the loss of an ample income as the possibility that the old Manor House, which had belonged to the Vernons for so many centuries, might pass into the hands of strangers,—that preyed upon his spirits. Just when all hope of saving it had gone, Sir John Carleton, an old college friend, returned from the continent, where he had been travelling for years, and came down at once to the Hermitage. I was present when my husband told all. Sir John listened, coldly as I thought, but I was mistaken. 'Harry,'

he said at last, 'you know I was always pretty well off, as far as money goes, and then I married an heiress, and now I want just such a place as this to settle down in for a few years, by way of a change. Let me buy it of you, and by the time I am tired of it, you will be flourishing again, and coming home with plenty of Australian gold in your pocket, and the old place will have its right master again.' Harry did not speak, but I shall never forget the look he gave Sir John as he held out his hand to him. 'Then it is settled,' said Sir John. 'Yes.' That was all that passed then. My husband's spirits revived, but in a few weeks he became so ill that it was evidently useless to go on with our preparations for leaving England, and again the old feeling troubled him that his son would not inherit the home of his ancestors. I wonder at myself," continued Mrs. Vernon, "that I can tell you all this so calmly. I was once so different,—so excitable, and so dependent. Harry thought and acted for me. When the one blow was struck which levelled to the dust the pillar of strength I had been clinging to, and I had to stand alone, a change came over me; I was the same and yet another."

Mrs. Vernon had forgotten that she was in a railway carriage, and saw nothing of the miserable-looking places, half buried in sand, between Adelaide and the Port, and which are distinguished by the euphonious name of Woodville, and the high-sounding one of Alberton. She had become deadly pale, but there was no other trace of emotion. Tears were in the kind eyes of Mrs. Graham, as she said gently—

"Yes, the same; but henceforth to bear witness to the truth of the words, 'My strength is made

perfect in weakness,' and to prove that the God of the fatherless will maintain the cause of the widow."

Mrs. Graham was a true woman and a Christian ; and with the Christian's hope before her, a warm heart, and a clear judgment, she had not fallen into the common error, and adopted the popular notion of the world, that it is painful to the bereaved to hear the dead spoken of. Those who hold this opinion little know how the heart of one who has deeply loved, longs to hear the departed one mentioned lovingly by the living,—how the simple name of the one who has gone away, breathed forth softly, as one would speak of a sleeper lest we should awaken him, falls like music on the ear of the mourner.

"I think I can finish the story for you, dear Mrs. Vernon. You cheered your husband by telling him that when he was gone, all places would be alike to you ; and that you should be far happier in striving to fulfil his wishes in a distant land, than you would be in remaining at the Hermitage a little while longer, and then leaving it for a humble home in England. And you persuaded him that Harry would accomplish what he himself would have done ; and he believed and trusted you, and now you are here and his old friend is taking care of the Manor House for you."

"Yes, that was it, and so you see my boy had better commence his work as soon as possible."

"I cannot, after what you have told me, even wish you to remain in Adelaide. I believe Frank has almost, if not quite, made up his mind as to which shall be Harry's first engagement in the battle of life, but he intended that he should bivouac with us for a long time, some months at least, if you

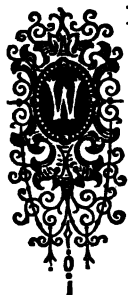
approve and would stay with us, too; but here we are at the Port. Brown's store is not far from the station."

They found Mrs. Brown slowly recovering, and grateful for Mrs. Vernon's warmly remembered kindness on board the steamer. Mrs. Vernon thought nothing of it, and little dreamed that what she considered a mere act of duty and common christian kindness, would be productive of a rich harvest; and that much of her domestic comfort in Australia would result from it.





CHAPTER V.



WHEN Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Vernon returned from the Port, they found Mr. Graham standing at the drawing room window, watching his young guests enjoying themselves in a broad walk, shaded by trellis work and vines. They were discussing the events of the day, and looked as happy as they really were. Edith was bounding from one to another as though it were a pleasure to her to move; and Alfred Graham followed her with his eyes and looked at her as if he had never seen anything like her before. Nor had he. An Australian summer had not yet paled the young cheek or faded the roses, whose bloom had deepened under the influence of the sea breezes during the long voyage from England; while the light that shone in her dark brown eyes was but the shadowing forth of the light heart and joyous spirit that animated her.

"Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed, as she caught sight of Mrs. Vernon, "we have had such a nice day. I have seen an emu, and its legs and feet are as beautiful as its feathers are; different from anything you ever saw before. I wish you had been with us."

"Edith has fallen in love with the kangaroos," remarked Harry.

"Because, they are so fond of their young ones," said Edith. "They nurse them, and are so droll in their movements."

"Were the kangaroos the only queer animals you saw?" enquired Mr. Graham.

Edith looked at him for a moment, considering what he meant, then, as he smiled, she suddenly turned to Mrs. Vernon.

"There was the strangest old man there, mamma. He spoke to me, though I never saw him before."

"What did he say to you?"

"Please tell mamma, Mr. Graham."

"There was an old Irishman at the gardens, who seemed to be as much amused at Edith's movements, when feeding the monkeys, as she was at the capers of the kangaroos; and at last, in true Irish fashion, he exclaimed, 'May the Lord bless your young heart, and may your bright eyes never be shaded by anything worse than their own long fringes.'"

"A very good wish," said Alfred.

"Edith was so surprised," continued Mr. Graham, "that she stood still and looked at the old man rather ominously. For a moment I thought she was angry, when suddenly 'a change came o'er the spirit of her dream,' and she said 'Thank you.'"

"Was it wrong, mamma?" asked Edith, colouring. "He looked so kindly at me, and as if he meant what he said. I am sure he did not intend to be rude."

"No, dear, not wrong at all, if you felt that he only meant it in kindness."

"I believe," said Mr. Graham, "he cared more for Edith's warm 'Thank you,' than for the half-crown I saw you slip into his hand afterwards, Alf."

"Very likely," replied Alfred. "A kind word

reaches the heart,—money only goes into the pocket.”

Alfred walked away, and Mr. Graham said,—

“Kate, I think sometimes that is a strange boy of yours.”

“He takes after his father,” was the reply of Mrs. Graham as she looked after her son; “and yet he is very different,” she added. “He is grave and—”

“And I am—what?” enquired Mr. Graham, as his wife paused.

“Well, not grave, like Alfred.”

“Is he grave?” said Edith, whom Mrs. Graham had drawn towards her. “I think he has the merriest laugh I ever heard.”

“Except your own, puss,” rejoined Mr. Graham. “And how,” turning to Mrs. Vernon, “have you enjoyed your excursion to the Port? Not much fine scenery in that direction!”

“Don’t mention it,” exclaimed Mrs. Graham. “It is a sandy desert; but I must not stay to talk. I will order what is called here, a tea-dinner, immediately,” she continued, addressing Mrs. Vernon, “for I suspect you are all hungry; and while it is preparing, we shall improve our appearance by getting rid of some of the dust we have brought home with us.”

“You have plenty of dust in Adelaide and the neighbourhood,” said Mrs. Vernon, as she took up a black crape shawl that she had thrown off on entering the room.

“You see but the beginning of evil in November,” replied Mr. Graham. “The rainy season is not long over. In March we may have rain, or a thunder storm may lay the dust sooner, but that is quite uncertain.”

"Then I don't know what state your country will be in before the March rains."

"No, you can form no idea of its burnt-up appearance ; and when you have been here three months longer, and have felt the hot winds, you will be surprised, perhaps, at the abundance of the delicious fruits which grow in the gardens around Adelaide. In speaking of South Australia, we must, in fairness, remember her advantages as well as her disadvantages ; and I think many old colonists would tell you, that if she were weighed in the balance she would not be found wanting. Our bishop, for one, would tell you so. It is not, however, likely that persons who have had a comfortable home in England can, on arriving in a new country, agree on this point with an old colonist who has become acclimatised, and has insensibly grown into liking the freedom and enterprise he meets with in a young colony. As you have arrived at the commencement of the hot season, I should advise you when mentally putting the dust and the hot winds in one scale, to put the sunshine and the fruit in the other."

"I will try," said Mrs. Vernon, "but I am afraid I shall be tempted sometimes to make comparisons, and think with too much regret of the land we have left, and the flowers Moore was thinking of when he wrote,—

'Tis the smiles and the tears of our own isle of showers,
That calls the full spirit of fragrancy forth.'

I am not quite sure that I have given his words correctly ; but come, Isabelle, we shall keep Mrs. Graham waiting if we stay longer."

Mrs. Graham's drawing room windows opened on

a wide verandah, which commanded a fine view of the Mount Lofty ranges. Always grand and beautiful, those old hills never look so well as a short time before sunset, when the deep ravines are lying partly in shadow and partly lighted up by the rays of the setting sun. The smoke of the few wood fires, which are burning in Adelaide on a November evening, do not cloud the atmosphere, and there is no mist rising from the earth to obscure the landscape. There stand the hills bathed in a flood of light, and the air so pure, so clear, that at a distance of four miles, every bare ledge of rugged rock,—every green mound and wooded slope are distinctly visible. Mr. Graham had often looked upon those hills and watched the lengthening of the shadows, as the sun went down, and he stood at the window, for some time after Mrs. Vernon had left the room, watching them again.

“What are you thinking of?” said a low, soft voice; and a hand rested on his shoulder. He turned, and drawing the hand within his arm, he answered,—

“I was thinking at that moment, Kate, that the scene before us is a type of a cheerful old age, resulting from a well spent life. There is no gloom in that setting,” and he pointed to the sunlight resting upon the hills.

“No,” she answered, “and the sun sets to rise again.”

“But that was only a momentary thought,” Mr. Graham continued; “it came as it has often done before, why and how, I do not know. I had been thinking before of Mrs. Vernon and her children, and of their unfitness for Australian life.”

“I think you are mistaken, Frank. The finest steel will bear the roughest handling.”

"You are right there ; and you think the metal so superior in this case that it will stand the roughing it will meet with here ?"

"I do,—I am sure of it."

"Time will prove if you have arrived at a right conclusion ; you are not often mistaken."

"Oh yes, I am," she replied, "and should be much oftener if I did not adopt your opinions and follow your advice ; but have you not often noticed that sooner or later real superiority does succeed,—maintains its own position, and reduces all with which it comes in contact to its proper level ?"

"Yes, sooner or later, certainly."

"Besides," urged Mrs. Graham, "the knowledge that will enable a person to do one thing well, if brought to bear on all ordinary duties of life, will cause them to be done better than they would be by persons of an inferior stamp. Mrs. Vernon has a mind of the highest order, according to my notions. Adversity will only raise her. In prosperity she would simply seem to be a refined, amiable, and accomplished woman. In times of trial and difficulty she would, I believe, prove herself equal to any emergency ; and Isabelle would be, too."

"I suppose so, if Lavater is right in all he says, for I never saw two faces more alike than her's and her mother's,"

"Harry thinks her perfect," said Mrs. Graham.

"Who, Isabelle ? I fancied Edith was the favourite sister. Boys always have a favourite among their sisters."

"No ; he may seem to take more notice of Edith, but she is too much like him to be his favourite. Men generally like their opposites in women."

"Harry is a boy at present, Kate."

"Yes, but 'the boy is father to the man.'"

"There is just a little bit of the iceberg about Isabelle," rejoined Mr. Graham. "She is very beautiful and looks very good, but I like sunshine better than moonlight."

"You would not compare Isabelle Vernon to an iceberg, if you had heard all that Harry said to me about her yesterday. I happened to ask him some question about his home in England, and that led to his telling me of his father's illness and of Isabelle's attention to him. He said she was the most cheerful of any of them after their misfortunes commenced, and during Mr. Vernon's illness, anticipating every wish of his, and thinking of everything just as if she had been a woman instead of a girl. Her father used to call her the light of his home."

"Yes, I can imagine all that of Isabelle, but,—"

"Sceptic!" said Mrs. Graham, "I have not told you all that Harry related to me. You have formed your opinion too hastily,—you have not known Isabelle long enough to—"

"Excuse my interrupting you, Kate, but pray how much longer have you known Miss Vernon than I have?"

Mrs. Graham laughed. "Well, never mind; just let me tell you what happened the night Mr. Vernon died, and then you will think as I do about Isabelle. She was quite calm and quiet, Harry said, when her father died, and he heard her say, as she left the room, 'Don't cry, mamma, he is happy now.' A few hours after, he thought he should like to see his father, and went to his room. There he found Isabelle. He said he could not tell me of her wild grief,—that was his own expression. It almost frightened him, and yet, he said, it did not surprise

him, for sometimes fire seemed to flash from her eyes, it always did if she saw a dumb animal ill-used, or an old person treated with disrespect, or a little child unkindly."

"I must acknowledge my judgment to be at fault after hearing that story, Kate. I shall study her more attentively. She cannot be an ordinary character, and I must confess to liking something out of the common way."

"I am afraid you will not have an opportunity of studying her character, for Mrs. Vernon has decided upon leaving us, as soon as some plan for the future is arranged."

"Perhaps she is right. I will talk to her this evening a little, for if the plan I have been thinking of is carried out, the less time lost the better."

Just then a large bell announced that Mrs. Graham's tea-dinner was on the table, and the party, that speedily assembled round it, were quite ready to do justice to a fine wild turkey, and the preserved apricots and peaches, which Edith seemed delighted to hear, were as plentiful in Australia as apples and pears are in England.

"Now, Harry," said Alfred, on adjourning to the drawing room, "let us have some of your patriotic songs. Mamma!" turning to Mrs. Graham, "Harry has been telling me so much about England, of the old churches and castles, the men-of-war with their sailors, and the horse guards and the soldiers, and fifty other things, that I am beginning to think that there is nothing to see in Australia, and to wish we lived in England."

"You shall go there, my boy, some day," said Mr. Graham. I never intended that you should spend your life here, as you know. Make the best

of your time at the college for another year and then you will see a place where I spent many happy terms. It will make me feel young again to be in Oxford."

"I think," remarked Mrs. Vernon, "that it must be a great disadvantage to young people to live entirely in a new country."

"I have no doubt of it," said Mr. Graham. "Just as persons become narrow-minded and in some degree selfish from living too much by themselves and for themselves, separated from the rest of the world, and dwelling only upon what is passing in their own homes or in the country town or village in which they live, so it is with persons here. They have no opportunities of having their minds enriched by the impressions produced by works of art, or enlarged by becoming acquainted with those who live in other ages of the world, by a study of their paintings, their sculpture, their architecture, their exquisite bronzes, and all those things in which the ancients excelled. They have no opportunity of comparing themselves with others, and the consequence is, they have no idea of their own deficiencies."

"That is a great excuse for them," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Certainly it is," replied Mr. Graham, "but one would wish to remedy the evil if it were possible."

"They are quite contented," said Mrs. Graham, "and is it not better that they should be?"

"No; not that they should be contented with a bad state of things when there is a way to mend it."

"But how can they mend it, Frank, if they have not the opportunity?"

"They have opportunities of improving and en-

larging their ideas on some points, and it is for not availing themselves of those that I blame them. The men, for instance, who take upon themselves the responsibility of making laws for the government of a new country, should not be above studying the laws of old countries. I do not mean to say that all the laws that are suited to, and work well in an old country, such as England, would do for Australia, but the united and progressive wisdom of centuries, must surely be sounder and deeper than the raw and undigested theories of men who have lived behind a counter, until the wealth they have acquired in their various occupations, enables them to leave the shop for the House of Assembly. Yet these are the very men who think themselves infallible. It was only the other day," continued Mr. Graham, "that I heard one of our ministers say, 'The only history worth giving to a boy to study, was the history of America. What,' he pompously asked, 'was the use of studying a worn-out constitution, like that of England?'"

"What a donkey the fellow must be," said Harry in a low tone to Alfred; "he deserved kicking."

"You would have to kick hard before you made him feel much," replied Alfred, in the same tone.

"Why?"

"Not being a doctor I can't tell you why exactly, because I don't know where the seat of feeling, the nerves, and all those kinds of things, are, but I have a notion that they lie deeper than the surface, and Mr. Dashwood has such a prodigious super-stratum of fat that, if my theory is correct, you would have as much difficulty in hurting him as—"

"As," exclaimed Harry, "Oliver Cromwell had in injuring a stone wall defended by woolsacks."

"Yes ;" and as the two boys broke into a merry laugh, Mr. Graham said :

"Now, Harry, give us a song."

"What is it to be ?" asked Isabelle, as she sat down to the piano ; "The British Oak ?"

Harry sang it well and heartily, and as he finished he placed "The Englishman" before Isabelle, saying, "Listen to this, Alfred ; it will do you good to hear it."

"You will like that best of all," said Edith, as she put "The British Lion" into Alfred's hand.

"Don't you like that song, Mr. Graham ?" asked Edith.

"Yes, very much ; Harry's songs, and his manner of singing them, have stirred some old feelings which I had almost forgotten. They have been only slumbering, I find, during my long sojourn in Australia ; they are not dead ; Harry has made me remember that I am an Englishman."

"Is it possible for an Englishman ever to forget the fact ?" said Mrs. Vernon.

"Some do, and are proud of doing so."

"I cannot understand that."

"You will when you have been a few years in the colony, if you become acquainted with many of the people. Most of them occupied a very different position at home from that they have attained here ; many, by real merit and persevering industry, have acquired large fortunes. They have given their children as good an education as the colony affords ; they are members of the House of Assembly or of the Legislative Council ; in short, they are great men here ; in England they would be 'nobodies.' Others have contrived to get to the top of the tree by fortunate speculations. These men are not very scrupu-

lous, and many of their transactions would be an effectual bar in the old country to their approaching a certain class of persons, with some of whom they occasionally come in contact here on account of the office they hold and of the position their wealth has enabled them to take. This altogether unfits them for going back to the poor relations they left in England. Sometimes they pay their old home a visit, but they invariably return. Wealth acquired in Australia is no passport to even moderately good society at home, unless it is accompanied by respectable antecedents and polite manners. I once heard a rather satirical friend of mine remark, in reference to some of our wealthy colonists, 'They come back from England complaining of the cold, but it is the cold shoulder they really mean.' "

"I don't know that I ever heard you speak quite so severely of Australian society before," said Mrs. Graham.

"I did not mean to be severe, Kate ; but Mrs. Vernon and Harry's songs have roused some of my old world notions. I should be very sorry to be unjust to the inhabitants of a country to which I owe so much as I do to South Australia, nor do I think I have been in anything I have said. It is the simple truth ; truth is, however, sometimes severe."

"I see you like England, Mr. Graham," said Isabelle. "Let me sing to you 'Native Scenes.' It is one of my favourite songs." And without waiting for a reply, she commenced singing.

It was not her clear, rich voice, beautiful as Mr. Graham felt it to be, so much as the distinct enunciation of her words, and the intense feeling with which she uttered them, that arrested the attention. Mr. Graham, who was an ardent admirer of music,

was charmed, and told Isabelle she had brought visions of his early days more vividly before his mind's eye than they had been for many long years ; on which Mrs. Graham made a remark about icebergs, which to most of those present appeared quite irrelevant to the subject. Mrs. Vernon rose as Isabelle concluded her song, and, passing through one of the windows, stepped out on the verandah. The song had been rather more than she could yet bear. Isabelle was about to follow, but Mr. Graham stopped her.

“I want to talk to your mamma, my dear, upon a subject of some importance, and I think there is no better time than the present.”

When Mrs. Vernon entered the room an hour later she looked calm and cheerful ; and Mr. Graham, who made his appearance soon after, smiled at his wife, and rubbed his hands together, as he always did when he was particularly pleased. Mrs. Graham knew that the proposal he had made was accepted.





CHAPTER VI.



BETWEEN one and two hundred miles from Adelaide is Kooroona, an extensive sheep run belonging to Mr. Graham. He had taken up the land in the early days of the colony, and for many years had resided there entirely, personally superintending the various improvements which from time to time he found it desirable to make. The land was in some places nicely wooded. Fine old gums, sheoaks, pines, and the beautiful tree to which English settlers have given the name of the wild cherry, were interspersed with smaller shrubs; dwarf mallies, their lovely white blossoms contrasting beautifully with their shining dark green leaves and the pale crimson of the blossoming sprays; the sweet-scented and other wattles, with their golden flowers; the feathery creepers, twining their slender stems luxuriantly round the branches of the trees; the sturt pea, with its magnificent scarlet blossom, and the smaller but graceful kennedyea, trailing along the ground, made the wooded parts look like a flowering wilderness. At the foot of a hill, thickly covered with trees, was the bed of a creek. Very narrow was the little stream of water during the summer months. Sometimes, after a longer continuance than usual of dry weather,




the sound of running water ceased altogether ; and but for the deep basins here and there, familiarly known in the colony as "water holes," the supply would have been insufficient even in ordinary seasons, and would have failed entirely during the long droughts which seem to visit South Australia periodically.

As soon as Mr. Graham had decided upon living at Kooroona, he wisely employed some of his labourers in sinking for water, and after several failures he at length found a spring which promised an abundant and permanent supply. The small homestead in which he lived, while prosecuting the search for water, he thought would be a comfortable house for his head man—the superintendent of the station ; and on the side of the hill, which for some little distance was a gentle slope from the bed of the creek, he cleared away the brushwood, built a good house, and laid out gardens. He was careful, however, not to fall into the common error of cutting down the larger trees, a fatal mistake in such a climate as that of South Australia, but one which the colonists appear to be wonderfully slow in discovering, and the consequence is, that many an acre of land has been cleared of fine old trees, in localities where they would have been of the greatest use as a shelter from the scorching north wind. Where they once stood, giving freshness and beauty to the scene, the eye now rests on nothing but a sandy desert ; not a vestige remains of the forest in which the native Australian hunted, and made his green wurley, and lighted his wood fire to keep away the bad spirit, ere he wrapped his opossum rug round him and lay down to rest. Many happy years Mr. and Mrs. Graham spent at Kooroona ; almond,

orange, and fig trees, vines, nectarines, apricots, and peaches, roses, oleanders, and many smaller flowers, even the little bright-eyed violet, always reminding them of England, grew up around their bush home ; and it was with regret that they left it to give Alfred the advantage of other society besides that of his tutor.

On leaving Kooroona, Mrs. Graham gave everything in charge to a trusty servant, who had lived with them for twelve years, and whose marriage about eighteen months before our story commences had caused her considerable anxiety. The reader need scarcely be told that this trusty domestic was the Mrs. Brown whom Mrs. Vernon met with on board the steamer. The time was also drawing near when Mr. Graham had determined upon taking his son to England, and it was necessary to come to some decision about Kooroona. Mrs. Graham had become so attached to the place that she did not like giving it up altogether, and secretly hoped that when Alfred had been a few years in England he would wish to return to the scenes of his early youth, and that she should again spend part of the year at Kooroona. She said little about it, for she had lived long enough to know the folly of laying plans for future years, a time that might never come for her, and if it did, she argued with herself, circumstances will best point out the path to be taken.

On the evening of the day that the Grahams called upon Mrs. Vernon at the York Hotel they had sat down under the verandah, their usual resort on warm moonlight evenings. Alfred was walking in the garden, sometimes playing the concertina, then trying the flute ; he was passionately fond of music and promised to excel in it. Mrs. Graham appeared to



have been listening to him for some time, but when she spoke it was evident that her thoughts had been employed on another subject, for she said,—

“Don’t you think, Frank, that the very best thing you could do would be to ask Mrs. Vernon to go to Kooroona, and let her son learn all about sheep-farming? Duncan is a clever, steady man, and he would attend to all the directions you give him about young Vernon.”

“Precisely the thing I was thinking of myself, Kate. You see I can make arrangements for him to be doing something for himself immediately, with Duncan’s advice and assistance, and that will make Mrs. Vernon feel independent.”

“Yes; and she will have a pleasant house to live in; and being away from everyone but dependants, whom she will, no doubt, feel an interest in improving, she will be happier than she would be among strangers who would expect her to visit them.”

“I believe it is the best thing to be done,” said Mr. Graham; “and bush life is so entirely different from anything one has an idea of in England, that the novelty of it will serve to draw away her thoughts from the past; and I can give Duncan such orders that Harry will soon find some Australian gold in his pocket, and that without injuring our boy,—he will have plenty.”

And so it was settled that the plan should be proposed to Mrs. Vernon at an early opportunity.

It was with feelings of deep gratitude that Mrs. Vernon listened to Mr. Graham, as he explained his views. She felt, as he knew she would, unspeakably relieved; and when he told her that she need not trouble herself about the matter, that when she wished to start she had only to tell him a few days before,

and all should be arranged for her, but he hoped she would stay with them for a long time, Mrs. Vernon could only say that the longer they remained with such kind friends the less they should like leaving, and she thought that as Harry had to work, the sooner he began the better.

Mr. Graham agreed with her, and it was decided that they should await the arrival of the English mail, which was due in the course of a week, and then commence preparations for the journey.

On the day following the conversation related in the last chapter, Mrs. Vernon awoke with an unusual feeling of oppression and langour. Thinking it was the result of the closed windows and doors, she opened one of the French windows that faced the north, but shut it instantly. The hot wind that rushed in accounted for the stifling atmosphere of the room.

"Now you will know what is meant by a 'hot wind' day," said Mr. Graham, advancing to meet her as she entered the breakfast room, which, like every other in the house, was closely shut up.

"It is very oppressive," she replied.

"Not quite nine o'clock yet," said Mr. Graham ; "very early in the day to talk of the heat being oppressive ; the thermometer is not much above 80°."

Just then Harry came in.

"Have you been enjoying the morning air ?" enquired Mr. Graham, looking at the red face that presented itself.

"It is a regular roaster," was the reply. "The thermometer hanging in the shade of the verandah is up to 100°."

"Very likely ; it will be higher by and bye. Come and make a good breakfast, all of you," added Mr. Graham, taking his place at the table ; "it will

enable you to bear the heat better, for we shall have a warm day."

Breakfast over, Harry was told of the arrangement made the previous evening. With boyish enthusiasm, he looked forward to the new life he should commence at Kooroona, and spoke of the enjoyment he anticipated in hunting the emus and kangaroos. Had Mr. Graham been a less shrewd and careful observer, he might have feared that Mrs. Vernon was trusting to a broken reed,—a support that might fail her at any moment ; but, beneath a light exterior, he saw deeper feelings and higher aspirations, accompanied by a deep-seated love and reverence for his mother, which were unmistakable.

While Mr. Graham was talking to Harry, Alfred had taken Isabelle and Edith to the drawing room, to have, as he said, a morning concert for their own special entertainment, leaving Mrs. Vernon to talk over the coming changes with Mrs. Graham.

"You will have no arrangements to make," she said, in reply to a remark of Mrs. Vernon's, "but to engage a good housemaid to go with you. I am not quite satisfied with the woman who succeeded Brown, but I have not enough against her to induce me to dismiss her, and it is very likely we should not meet with one who would do better. The greatest drawback to domestic comfort in Australia is the class of servants we are troubled with. It seems to me that all who are too bad or indifferent to retain respectable situations at home, are sent out here as free or assisted emigrants. During the voyage they hear of the high wages given to servants ; that there is a constant demand for them ; in short, that they are so scarce they may be as independent as they please, and have almost anything they choose to ask for.

The consequence is, that exaggerated ideas of their own importance, and ignorance of the duties they undertake, interfere seriously with the comfort of their employers."

"Are there no exceptions?" enquired Mrs. Vernon.

"Yes, but they are few and far between, and those who meet with them have reason to be thankful."

"Then how shall I proceed to secure one of these exceptions?"


"I think the person who has supplied me with servants for many years is more likely to find a suitable one for you than anyone else; but you must prepare yourself for some annoyance from that source. No one can live in Australia without meeting with much. We are no better off than America is, and there, as you have probably heard, there are no servants, only 'helps.'"

"Very inefficient ones, too, I imagine," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Yes. An old colonist advised me, when I was married, to make it a rule always, to be absolutely independent of servants, and to let them see and feel that I was so; and that if they did not attend to their duties I could do without them. This was, she said, the only way to manage them, and I have often proved how true all she told me was."

"It is rather an uncomfortable state of affairs, according to English notions," remarked Mrs. Vernon.

"Decidedly so; but it is infinitely more uncomfortable to be the slaves of circumstances than the controllers of them. The utter discomfort, extravagance and mismanagement that reigns in houses where the domestics are allowed to have their own



way, from the fear that if spoken to and made to submit to certain regulations, they would leave, and their places not be filled again, is lamentable."

"Surely," said Mrs. Vernon, "there must be some remedy for an evil that affects the whole community."

"The only one is for the heads of families to come to a resolution that they will not allow the servants to rule them and their households, or pay extravagantly high wages to young women who know nothing. If all would simultaneously agree to adopt this system, there must be a change for the better; but a combination of that sort never can be formed, because, as a rule, people are influenced by personal motives and individual interests, and will not look beyond the immediate results to themselves, and make a temporary sacrifice to secure a permanent advantage."

"I think," said Mrs. Vernon, "I will commence our bush life by following the advice you found so useful, and make Isabelle and Edith independent of these Australian servants."

"You will never regret doing so. I believe one thing that makes persons here so dreadfully afraid of losing a bad servant is, that as it is quite uncertain how long a time may elapse before her place will be filled, the mistress has to do the work of the house herself, which persons who have risen in life consider *infra dig.*"

"As if," remarked Mrs. Vernon, "the performance of any duty could lower a person!"

"That is just what the majority of the people in Australia cannot comprehend. They would understand you quite as well if you addressed them in French or Italian, as they would if you told them

that the motive dignified the act, and that the performance of any office, however menial, from a sense of duty, elevated rather than degraded.

"You appear to be going deep into the subject," said Mr. Graham, who in the pauses of his conversation with Harry, had heard some of the remarks about servants, and the latter part of the dialogue entirely.

"It is a subject that does not interest gentlemen," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Not as a general rule," he replied; "but it forces itself upon us in Australia. I quite agree with that last remark of your's, Kate. If you carry out the idea, and weave it, as it were, into every action of daily life, what importance does it give them."

"Yes," rejoined Mrs. Vernon, "it makes us feel that in one sense there are no such things as trifles. I mean that no duty is a trifle. The thing to be done may seem to be a small one, but I suppose it is the doing of it from the highest and purest motive, that of faith in and obedience to the will of God, that makes it of importance to us individually."

"No doubt of it," rejoined Mr. Graham. "The lives of most of us consist in the performance of seemingly unimportant acts, each following the other, as minute after minute is given us in which to do them. The hour passes, and with it the opportunity of doing the work apportioned to that hour."

"It may be done in the next though, Mr. Graham," said Harry.

"It may, Harry," replied Mr. Graham, gravely; "but that hour also had its appointed work and so on till the end; and when that comes, what then?"

Harry looked earnestly at Mr. Graham, who waited for his answer.

"Well, if you look at it in that way, sir, something must be left undone at the last."

"You will find it worth while to regard the subject in that light. It is a difficult task, I know, especially in youth, but try to remember it sometimes, Harry; don't let the idea pass away from your mind altogether. Use is second nature, and the oftener you remember that in each hour of every man's life there is something for him to do, and that something is lost or gained in this world and in the next, by the neglect or fulfilment of it, the less time you will waste."

"I don't believe I should ever have thought about time and the duties of life, and all the rest of it, in that way, if you had not put the thoughts into my mind," said Harry, reflectively.

"But now that they are there, let them stay," said Mrs. Vernon.

"I'm not sure, mamma, that I could 'quite entirely get rid of them,' as our Irish gardener used to say of the weeds, but I don't suppose I shall remember them often enough."

"I think," said Mr. Graham, "if I were asked what duty is least recognised and most neglected, I should say, the use we make of time."

"I am afraid we should all have to confess to having wasted it, Frank; and in this climate one is often very much tempted to do so. I fear," Mrs. Graham continued, addressing Mrs. Vernon, "you must feel the heat very much."

She rose, as she spoke, and drawing aside the shade curtain to one of the windows, looked out. The glare was intense. The white buildings of

Adelaide were partially obscured by dust and sand, and Harry who, like many other new arrivals, felt a great interest in watching the thermometer, left the room for a moment, but returned with the announcement that it was 108° in the shade.

"The less frequently you make those observations the better," said Mr. Graham. "I fell into the habit myself when I came here, and during the first summer I was imparting the pleasing information to everyone I met, that the thermometer was 108° or 112° in the shade, or 120° or 30° in the sun. If a knowledge of the fact did not actually make me hotter, it made me think more of the heat; and at last I remember some one said to me, 'My dear fellow, I daresay it is as you state, but it is better to have the benefit of a doubt. When you know the the temperature is above 100° your feelings rise to the same level, and it helps to keep you cool to fancy that you may possibly be breathing an atmosphere not heated beyond 90° .' I laughed at the time, thought about it afterwards, and the next hot season put the thermometer out of the way. I felt the benefit of doing so."

As Mr. Graham finished speaking, a rushing sound was heard, the room suddenly became dark, and Mr. Graham, quickly drawing up the blinds, exclaimed,—

"Now, Mrs. Vernon, you will have the pleasure of seeing a South Australian dust storm."

Mrs. Vernon approached the window and looked out. Nothing could be seen. Garden, houses, the bright sunlight, all were hidden by a dense impenetrable cloud of dust. For the space of a few minutes the darkness increased, and the wind gathered strength. When it had spent its utmost



fury, and the power of gravity had drawn the dust and stones and fragments of all imaginable kinds to the ordinary position which they usually occupy in the kingdom of nature, the effects of the storm were seen. Fences had been blown down, heavy gates torn from their hinges ; verandahs unroofed, and the beautiful climbing plants, which a few moments before were twining luxuriantly round the posts and trellis-work, were trailing on the ground, or had disappeared altogether.

“What a commotion !” exclaimed Harry. “One would think all the furies were let loose. How often is Adelaide favoured with these visitations, Mr. Graham ?”

“Happily, not often. We have always more or less dust when the wind blows from the north, but we rarely have as violent a storm as this, not perhaps once a year.”

“I should call that pretty often,” said Mrs. Vernon.

“At any rate,” rejoined Mr. Graham, “we old colonists are thankful to have a summer pass away bringing only one such storm in its train. Ordinary dust storms are of frequent occurrence.”

“I had much rather be caught in a snow storm,” said Harry ; “would not you, Mr. Graham ?”

“Decidedly ; it is the least evil of the two. One is almost blinded by these hurricanes, and so hopelessly covered with dust ; a bath is the only remedy.”

“We were told that the climate of South Australia was a very fine one,” said Mrs. Vernon.

“So it is. It is no more fair to judge this climate by the hot wind days, than it would be to form an opinion of that of England by one of the dark days of November. We set against those the bright frosty mornings of January, the cheerful May days, and the

long sunny ones of June ; and here you must set against exceptional days like this, the weeks and months of beautiful weather that we have towards the close of the rainy season, and which continues until the first hot wind sweeps over the land."

"That must cause a very sudden change in the appearance of the country," remarked Mrs. Vernon.

"It does. In a few hours the grass is all burnt up ; not a vestige of anything green is to be found."

"How long does it take to make a fortune in Australia ?" enquired Harry.

Harry was answered by a general laugh.





CHAPTER VII.



ENGLISH mail day ! There are two of them in each month, and what days those are ! The one brings news from the old land, whither all the best feelings of the heart turn ; where early recollections dwell, and the home of childhood stands as in old time : the other takes away from the new country, tales of day-dreams too bright to be realized, and which fade away long before the morning of life has attained to noonday strength ; hopes of successful speculation, which too often end in ruin ; gloomy forebodings which a strong will, a clear head, and a ready hand, scatter to the winds ; or of clouds which rise in the mind of the emigrant, to be, in after years, fringed with gold, by honest labour and bold enterprise.

On "English mail day" business is at a standstill, and colonial news at a discount. Once a month everyone meets everyone else with the greeting, "The mail has arrived;" just as, once a year, in England, friend greets friend with the words, "A merry Christmas," and "A happy New Year." When the mail is leaving for England, it is the excuse for setting all other business and engagements aside. If some thoughtless individual so far

forgets himself as to plan an excursion or arrange a picnic, it is an utter failure. The merchant has his English letters to write ; the lawyer his English clients to attend to ; and private letters written on that day, generally close with, "Excuse haste, it is English mail day."


Now all this may appear paradoxical, and at variance with the statement, that most of the prosperous colonists like Australia ; they choose to live here, when they might, if they would, return to England ; they cry down the old country and praise the new one ; they make disparaging remarks about the climate of England, and will not allow any fault to be found with that of Australia.

I once heard an old colonist say that he never felt better than on a "hot wind day ;" that it agreed with him, and he liked it. Perhaps it did agree with him, for he could not have weighed much less than twenty-five stone, and it is said that "the wish is father to the thought ;" so this happy individual may have made himself believe that a wind which sends the mercury in a thermometer up to 160° is not only pleasant but positively healthy and refreshing. However, the old colonist's opinion of a hot wind is an exceptional one ; a delusion by no means common.

To return to what others say and do.

They tell you they prefer Australia ; the country, the climate, the mode of life, and everything else ; yet all is forgotten every month, and England and English news the one subject of interest, the one absorbing topic of conversation.

Why is this ? is it really paradoxical ? No ; it only proves that man's heart is better than his head, and we like him all the more, even while we smile at the delusion under which he lives. A true-hearted



Englishman never can be false to his native land. He may fancy he likes another better, and circumstances may make it a more suitable home to his altered position. The ample fortune he has acquired may render it desirable that he should live in Australia ; but in his heart, England is his home, and the fact crops out oftener than he is aware of, or would allow, even to himself, if he were told of it.

The mail for which Mrs. Vernon was waiting had been expected for nearly a fortnight before it arrived. When the letter-bag was brought in to Mr. Graham, it was speedily opened, and soon he, and his wife, and Mrs. Vernon, were deeply engaged. Alfred proposed that the rest of the party should adjourn to another room. Isabelle looked at her mother, and would have lingered, but Mrs. Vernon said,—

“Go now, dear, and you shall have all my letters to yourself, as soon as I have read them.”

Among Mr. Graham's letters, was one deeply bordered with black. The writing he did not know, and he sat turning it over, first looking at the direction, then examining the seal.

“Very odd ! I never saw this writing before ;” and again he turned it over.

Mrs. Graham had looked up from a letter she was reading, more than once ; and twice she seemed about to speak ; then thought better of it, and read on. At last Mr. Graham deliberately broke the seal, slowly took the letter out of the envelope, unfolded it, and looked at the signature.

“I don't know the name, who can it be ?” he said, loud enough for an attentive listener to hear, but speaking to himself.

Mrs. Vernon was too much absorbed in the contents of her letter, to hear or see anything else.

Not so, Mrs. Graham, who quick in action as she was excitable in temperament, was intent upon her husband's slow march, though she appeared to be reading her own letter; and she was gradually approaching that state of effervescence which such natures are wrought up to, by the deliberate movements of those of an opposite character.

The letter was laid down, and the envelope taken up and critically examined.

"Can't make out that post-mark," he muttered, turning it round, and looking at it from every point of view.

This was too much. Mrs. Graham could stand it no longer.

"Frank, why on earth don't you read the letter? That will tell you who wrote it and where it comes from. I could have read it half-a-dozen times, while you have been looking at that envelope."

"Very likely, my dear. It is strange;" said Mr. Graham, meditatively, "all these many years that I have been in Australia, I have never received a letter from anyone whose writing I did not at once recognise; and this I am quite sure I never saw before."

"Well! do read it, Frank. Don't you see the black border?"

"Yes, that makes it the more remarkable, because I have none but the most distant relations; a cousin, I can't tell how many removes, whom I never saw, and who lived in the west of England, on the same land he owned when Doomsday Book was written."

Mr. Graham was still trying to make out the post-mark; and Mrs. Graham, notwithstanding her impatience, could not help smiling at the last remark,

"He must be an old man now," she said.

"Of course I meant his ancestors owned the land;

but now, Kate, as I see you are getting impatient, I will read the letter."

Various exclamations raised Mrs. Graham's curiosity ; and when the letter was handed to her with the remark, "Read that and then prepare for going to England by the January mail," she snatched it eagerly, and began to read ; making a running commentary as she proceeded.

"But how is it ? I don't understand. I never knew you were heir to a large property ! Why did you never tell me ? And Elmwood Castle, that is yours ; and you are wanted immediately. Sir Charles Knowles died last year, leaving a son, three years old, who has since died, and now you inherit the property, but not the title. Are we to leave Australia and live in England ?"

"Which question do you wish me to answer first, Kate ?"

"You are laughing at me," she replied, laying down the letter, and looking up.

"Then I will be serious and try to tell you all you want to know. In the first place, I did not tell you I was heir to this property, because I only knew it myself a few minutes ago. I have never seen this remote cousin. All I knew was that we were related, and I remember hearing my uncle once say that if Sir Charles died without an heir, the title would become extinct. The property I never heard mentioned."

"How is it the title does not go with it ?"

"I am descended by the female line."

"Oh ! I see. Good-bye to Kooroona."

"Do you care so much for that place ?" asked Mr. Graham.

"I do. I cannot help it. I was so happy there.

But you will like to go and live in that old castle. I can see you will, I read it in your face."

"I can't deny it, Kate. I have lived abroad the greatest part of my life, by my own free choice ; but, what will you say, when I confess that since I read that letter, I feel to England and Australia much as I should do on looking at the masterpiece of one of the old painters and an early effort of genius by one of the moderns ?"

"I see we are doomed ;" said Mrs. Graham, half laughingly. "I wonder what Alfred will say !"

"I am going to find out," replied Mr. Graham, taking up the letter, and leaving the room.

"I am very sorry you will leave the colony so soon after we have come here," said Mrs. Vernon, whose attention had been completely arrested by the foregoing conversation. "Only," she added, "on my own account."

"Then you think I shall be better off in England than here ?"

"I am not a fair judge of Australian life ; but I cannot think there can be two opinions as to which is the most desirable country to live in."

"I suppose not ; but I was so very young when I came to Australia, that it is like home to me ; and I hope that in the course of a few years something will happen to bring you to England ; that is, if we stay there."

"That you will be sure to do. Alfred must not live away from his ancestral home. Only there can he learn the duties of an English gentleman, and fulfil them. For myself, I hardly dare to look forward. The present is enough."

"You will stay with us now, dear Mrs. Vernon, for another week or two, will you not ?"



"I think I must; for we shall not see you at Kooroona, but it will be better to fix a time for our departure. Shall we say this day fortnight?"

"Yes, if you had rather not stay here longer."

"I am anxious that Harry should lose no time; and I am not quite sure that it is the wisest plan to remain here so long as we have already done. The children will only miss Alfred the more."

"Alfred's loss will be the greatest," replied Mrs. Graham. "He is an only child, and will be quite lonely without Harry and that dear little Edith. She exercises a kind of fascination over him. I am often amused at the way in which he watches her. I am glad you will have those children in the country. I would not have them come in contact with the generality of the young people here, until their characters are so formed that colonial habits and manners will not influence them, for the world."

"I am more than content to take them into the bush," was the reply.

When Mr. Graham opened the drawing room door, he found Alfred engaged in giving Edith a lesson on the concertina.

"Sorry to interrupt the music lesson," he said, "but here is a letter for you to read."

As Alfred read, the colour mounted to his face.

"What shall you do, papa?"

"Go by the January mail."

"Go where?" exclaimed Edith, "To England?"

"Yes; will you come with me?"

"I could not go without mamma. Is Alfred going, too, Mr. Graham?"

"Yes; Alfred must go."

"You fortunate fellow," said Harry. "But it is a great bore for those who can't go with you."

"You will not come to Kooroona, now," said Edith.

"I am sorry," began Alfred.

"Oh, do not say you are sorry," exclaimed Isabelle. "You ought to be so very, very glad. It is such a beautiful land. You cannot go anywhere in the country without hearing the sound of running water, or the singing of birds; or walking in the shadow of fine old trees. And then every church or ruined castle has its own history. Such wonderful tales the old parish clerks tell you, and—"

Isabelle became aware that she was making a long speech, and suddenly stopped, blushing, as she did so; and Mr. Graham smiled and thought of icebergs.

"I shall like all that very much," Alfred said; "but I don't like not going to Kooroona, now you will be there."

"You would like to go to Kooroona first, and to England afterwards," said Mr. Graham.


"Yes; that is it; can't we do both?"

"No; it is impossible, unless you and mamma stay, and I go by himself."

"Mamma would not agree to that, I know. May I tell Harry all about this letter?"

"Certainly. I will leave you now to talk the matter over with your young friends."

They gathered round Alfred, and soon they lost sight of Kooroona, and all they had been planning in the way of taming kangaroos and emus, and making acquaintance with the native inhabitants, and a dozen other things, which children, and those who are not children in years, but whom experience has never taught a sterner lesson, arrange and look forward to, without a thought that circumstances may arise to frustrate and overthrow them all.



"And now you will live in a castle," said Edith, "and the old people in the village will tell you dreadful stories of what happened hundreds of years ago to those who were shut up in the dark dungeons."

"And you will see the portraits of your ancestors," pursued Isabelle; "and the suits of armour they wore in battle; and their swords and battle-axes."

"You will be like the eagle among birds," said Harry, drawing himself up proudly; and turning away from the group, he walked to one of the windows, and stood there apparently looking at some object in the garden. Alfred followed him.

"Why," he said, laying his hand on Harry's shoulder, "shall I be like the eagle?"

Harry's face flushed.

"Is he not a king among birds? Does he not build his nest in the clefts of the highest rock, and soar above the numerous small birds that are content to make their nests and hatch their young under the tiles of houses, or in the hedge-rows?"

"Well!" said Alfred, "and what then?"

"Do you suppose," pursued Harry, "that all are equal in England, as some fellow at the port intimated that they are here, when he remarked for my special benefit, that 'Jack was as good as his master in Australia'? You will soon see the difference, I can tell you. All that you will see from the windows of your castle, will be your own; and when you go beyond the porter's lodge, everyone you meet will touch his hat."

"I see what you mean, Harry. You would like to be an eagle always."

"Who wouldn't?" asked Harry, giving an un-

conscious kick to a footstool, which sent it half across the room.

"I suppose it is pleasant," said Alfred.

"Suppose ! You won't use that word, when you have lived in the eagle's nest for a few years."

"And while Alfred is living in the eagle's nest, what nest shall we live in ?" asked Edith, who only half understood the conversation.

"One on a much lower level."

"But," said the child, "we can fly upwards, and I shall try to reach the eagle's nest. If I do, and perch on the edge of it, won't you take me in ?" and she laughed, as she turned to Alfred, who took her hand, and was about to reply, when Harry said haughtily,—

"Our own nest is high enough ; we don't want to climb to another."

Edith looked as if she did not understand ; and said,—

"What are you angry for, Harry ?"

"He is not angry, only vexed," exclaimed Isabelle. "Don't you remember, Harry," she continued, "that the lark, which some old British bard says, 'rises to sing at Heaven's gate,' builds its nest on the ground. Mamma told me that the lesson we might learn from that, is the same which Solomon taught, when he wrote, 'Before honour is humility.'"

"Which last qualification you think I do not possess," said Harry, softening, as he always did, when he spoke to her.


"No, Harry dear, I did not say so. I did not think about it ; only if the lark can rise so high as to sing at Heaven's gate, when its nest is lower than the nests of others, why cannot we ?"

“And get into our old nest, the Hermitage, again. I will try, Isabelle. Go ahead, Alf,” he said, changing his tone. “Don’t stop here a day. Get into your lofty nest, and when I get back to mine, we will exchange calls.”





CHAPTER VIII.

“OOD morning, Mrs. Smith,” said Mrs. Graham, as an elderly woman, who looked more like a respectable housekeeper in England than the proprietor of a Colonial Registry Office, entered a small, neatly furnished apartment, where she and Mrs. Vernon had been waiting for the last ten minutes.

“I am sorry to have kept you waiting, ma’am, but I was engaged with another lady.”

“It is of no consequence, thank you. This lady is in want of a good housemaid. Can you find her one?”

Mrs. Smith looked at Mrs. Vernon.

“Not long in the colony, ma’am,” she remarked, addressing Mrs. Graham.

“No; only a few weeks. You are thinking that colonial servants will not satisfy English expectations, Mrs. Smith?”

“Well, ma’am, they never do.”

“My expectations are not high now,” said Mrs. Vernon. “You have lowered them considerably. Have you,” turning to Mrs. Smith, “any housemaids on your list now?”

“I have no regular housemaids, such as you have

been accustomed to at home, ma'am ; but I have several general servants. I am expecting two, if not three, to call at two o'clock who have good references, and they will have no difficulty in getting situations ; but I am afraid they will not suit you."

"I should like to see them and judge for myself. What time is it now?"

"Half-past one," said Mrs. Graham, looking at her watch, and thinking as she did so that it would be quite as well for Mrs. Vernon to see what Australian servants were like, though she felt quite sure, from what Mrs. Smith said, that those she was expecting to call would not be suitable for her friend. "Will you wait here, or shall we attend to our shopping and call again?"

"I will accompany you wherever you want to go."

"We will be back here by two or soon after, Mrs. Smith. I forgot that I had not mentioned a purchase I want to make," Mrs. Graham said, as they left the house.

They walked on till they came to a large repository for books, musical instruments, and all kinds of fancy goods.

Mrs. Graham asked for their best archery sets, from which she selected three, one larger and stronger than the others. "Those," she said, as they left the shop, "are for my young friends ; they will want some amusement in the bush."

When they returned to the Registry Office, a young woman in a silk dress, a small hat trimmed with glass beads and flowers, a lace shawl, and a fringed parasol in her hand, was waiting to receive them. She did not rise from her chair.

"I understand one of you wants a servant," fell on Mrs. Vernon's astonished ears.

Mrs. Graham had some difficulty in preserving her gravity, as she sat down on a chair which Mrs. Smith handed to her before leaving the room.

Mrs. Vernon remained standing; she looked at the young woman for a moment, and then said,—

"I am in want of a housemaid."

"Oh! I am accustomed to all kinds of work. I have lived in the best families."

"As housemaid?"

"Well, you may call it housemaid; I had all the work to do."

"You mean that you have been a general servant," said Mrs. Graham.

"Yes; in very genteel places. I could have stopped at any of them as long as I liked."

"Have you references?" enquired Mrs. Vernon.

"Have I what?"

"I mean, will your last mistress give you a character?"

"I hope I have one without asking for it; but, of course, if you want to know what I can do from her she will tell you. I generally get places without that. What wages do you give?"

Mrs. Vernon was beginning to wonder whether she was being engaged herself, and replied coldly, "Ten shillings a week to a competent person; but I do not think you are likely to suit me."

"Town or country?" enquired the girl, looking Mrs. Vernon full in the face.

"The country," said Mrs. Vernon, more frigidly than before.

"Then I could not undertake it; I have strong

objections to the bush. Good morning," and, with a half bow, she flounced out of the room.

"There!" said Mrs. Graham, as the door closed, "that is a very fair specimen of a large proportion of colonial servants."

"I would rather do the housework myself than have such a person as that in the house," replied Mrs. Vernon.

"So would I; but most of the people who live here would not. Rather than not have a servant they will put up with anything. That girl will not be out of a situation a week unless it is her own fault."

"Come along, Cressina," whispered the young lady in hat and flowers, to another quite as elaborately "got up." "It's no good. She's a new chum, and looks as if she wouldn't work herself, nor let those as helps her have their own way in doing the work. Ain't you coming?" as the other hesitated.

"I think I'll speak to her and hear what she says. You know I've saved no money."

"No; that last dress cost more than two months' wages. She lives in the bush somewhere."

"Oh! that won't do. We don't neither of us mean to go away from Adelaide."

The latter part of the last remark was addressed, in a louder tone of voice, to Mrs. Smith.

"Very well; then you must wait till another application is made."

"I've no objection to going up the country," said a plainly dressed young woman, who was waiting for her turn to come.

"You can go and speak to the lady, then; but I am afraid you don't know enough," and Mrs. Smith opened the door of the parlour.

Mrs. Vernon looked up, expecting to see another exhibiton of ignorance and folly ; but the sturdy form of Bridget Macnally presented as great a contrast to the over-dressed denizen of the aspiring little city of Adelaide, as she did to the respectable and respectful servants who have been trained in the charity schools of England ; or taught to work in their native village by mothers, who, before their marriage, were servants of the squire or of the rector.

"In what situations have you lived?" said Mrs. Graham, coming to the rescue ; for she saw that Mrs. Vernon was hesitating, and did not know what to do with the nymph of the "Emerald Isle."

"It isn't long that I've been in Australia ; but missis 'll give me a character."

"Why did you leave her?"

"I wasn't up to her ways, and she wasn't up to mine ; and so, says she, we'd better part, Bridget. I couldn't work to please her. She was English and I was from Ireland, you see ; and the countries don't like the same things."

"And you think you can manage housework properly?"

"Is it claning you mean ? I can do that right well, and I can wash, and knit, and—"

"What wages do you require?" asked Mrs. Graham."

"Twelve shillings a week to go into the bush."

Mrs. Graham, who had only made these enquiries to give Mrs. Vernon an opportunity of discovering the utter ignorance of those who unblushingly demand the most extravagant wages, now turned to her and said,—

"Will you make any further enquiries?"

"No. I do not intend to give twelve shillings a week to anyone in the capacity of housemaid."

"How much is it you will give? I'm not partic'lar to a shilling or so," said the undaunted Bridget.

"I could not engage you on any terms. You have not been accustomed to the kind of work I should require you to do."

"But you could just tell me what to be after. I ain't above being taught."

"It would not do. I could not undertake to teach you. Good morning."

Bridget disappeared.

"Is it a common thing for servants to demand twelve shillings a week for being taught their duties?"

"Not at all uncommon."

Mrs. Smith came in.

"I thought none who were coming to-day would suit," she said. "If you could wait for a week, I know one young woman who has lived in good places, and kept them. The family she was with last went to England last month. She is visiting a brother now at Clare; but I expect her back next week, and will send her to you."

"That will do, I think," said Mrs. Vernon.

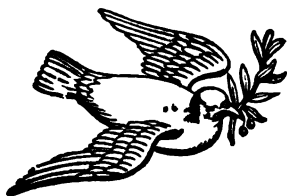
"Yes," replied Mrs. Graham, "you may depend on Mrs. Smith's recommendation."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Mrs. Smith, looking very much pleased. "I always try to get good girls, good places. Annie Roland told me she did not mind where she went, so that her mistress was a lady."

"Will she be content to receive ten shillings a week?" enquired Mrs. Graham. "I consider it quite enough however far she may have to go."


"Yes, ma'am ; she will be satisfied with that, anywhere. You see, ma'am," addressing Mrs. Vernon, "a great many of the richest people here, were servants themselves once, or something of that sort, and they don't know how to treat servants properly, and have to give extravagant wages to keep them ; but respectable, well-behaved girls don't like it, and so they will take lower wages to secure a comfortable home."

"They are very wise to do so," said Mrs. Graham.





CHAPTER IX.

“OME news for you, Jane,” said Mr. Watson, as he entered the room, where his wife was sitting engaged in earnest conversation with her mother, the day after the arrival of the December mail. Both looked up as Mr. Watson spoke. “The Graham’s are leaving Australia.”

“That must be a sudden decision, for Mrs. Graham did not allude to it when we called a few days ago.”

“A letter they received yesterday has occasioned this sudden move. Graham came in just before the office closed, and told me they should be off to England by next mail. He was in a great hurry. Young Vernon was with him. Any answer to your note, Jane?”

“Yes.” She gave him one which was lying on the table.

“Remarkably cool!” Mr. Watson said, as he folded the note.

“Perfectly polite, but the politeness of an entire stranger,” rejoined Mrs. Watson. “We could not expect more; but I should have regretted it more than I do had Mrs. Vernon remained in Adelaide or the neighbourhood, for I am sure I should have liked her and her family. Mamma was just speaking of them as you came in.”

“They remind me of those I used to know in England in my younger days,” said Mrs. Malcolm.

"It was refreshing to me to see the perfect ease and natural grace which characterises them all, after being so long accustomed to the bustling obtrusiveness and vulgar familiarity which distinguish the leading people here."


"I think," said Mrs. Watson, addressing her husband, and speaking with some hesitation, while a slight shade of annoyance passed over her face—

"I think you must have received young Vernon in the same way you spoke of them first to me. I mean," she added, seeing that Mr. Watson did not look pleased, "that you were not very cordial."

"I did not do as the Grahams have done, certainly. Well, it is of no consequence; as they are to live so far away as Kooroona, it will make no difference."

"Only that an opportunity has been lost of forming a desirable acquaintance," said Mrs. Malcolm. "One can never tell what changes will take place; and in a young colony especially, where persons, whose antecedents will not bear investigation, suddenly rise to a position which brings them in contact with those of a different stamp, it is well for the few who belong to the educated and refined of the upper and middle classes in England to know each other. It is agreeable, to say the least of it. I have lived many years in this colony, but I am not more reconciled to the manners of the so-called 'upper ten' of Australia than I was the day I landed; nor do I wish my daughters to lose an opportunity, when one occasionally presents itself, of making the acquaintance of an English gentlewoman. I saw that Mrs. Vernon was one the moment I looked at her."

"The acquaintance would have been of short



duration, it appears, as Mrs. Vernon is going to Kooroona."

"She may not always be there. Circumstances may change, and with them her residence."

"In that case we can renew the acquaintance," said Mr. Watson, "as you and Jane think it so desirable."

"Judging of Mrs. Vernon's feelings by my own," replied Mrs. Malcolm, "they will not lead her to meet future advances. She came here a stranger to all, with letters of introduction to two individuals—Mr. Graham and yourself. You merely noticed the introduction formally. The acquaintance has been too slight for her to care to renew it. Jane thinks as I do."

"We have invited her and the Grahams to dine with us," said Mr. Watson. "I cannot help their declining the invitation."

"No; whatever happens now is the result of the first move," rejoined Mrs. Watson. "In this instance that was a mistake."

"Ah! a single step in a wrong direction sometimes takes you where you would not go if you could help it," said Mr. Watson. "I asked the head of a department—the Commissioner of Crown Lands—to lunch with me the other day; he happened to call at the office just at the right time, and that is the result."

He threw a note on the table as he spoke.

"I shall not accept this invitation. Read that, mamma; why, we have not even exchanged calls, and yet Mrs. Langton asks me to dine with them."

"And we shall have to go, Jane."

"Impossible. Why should we?"

"Because he has extensive business transactions with the concern of which I am manager."

"But surely that does not render it necessary for me to visit his wife."

"Not unless she asked you ; but that she has now done. I know them well. The whole set would be up in arms if offence were given to one."

"We have never visited any of that set," said Mrs. Watson.

"The thin end of the wedge unfortunately got in the other day, and if one of that class can manage that he hammers away till the door gives way."

"But, really, you do not mean that we must go to this dinner party?"

"I do, Jane ; because I see no help for it under all circumstances. He is one of the directors, you know. I am very sorry on your account, for you will not like the people you will meet."

"If they only had a remote idea of the forms of civilized society they would not have asked us," said Mrs. Watson.

"No," replied Mrs. Malcolm ; "but they have never had an opportunity of knowing anything about them. That is the best excuse for them. We must make the largest allowance for ignorance of all kinds in Australia."

"Perhaps Mr. Finlay will be there," pursued Mrs. Watson, who was more annoyed than she generally allowed herself to be about anything. "I have often seen him with Mr. Langton."

"Are you afraid of losing your bracelets?" enquired Mr. Watson.

"No, not exactly afraid of that ; but I would infinitely prefer losing them in any ordinary way to dining with a convict. It is not as if he had committed one crime and repented of it ; but we never know what these men have been guilty of, or how

they may have acquired the money which enables them to live as they do and get into certain positions in the government ; and their assurance and presumption are evidences to me of their being hardened rather than repentant. If they showed some sense of shame, and kept themselves in the shade, I could feel sorry for them and respect their humility."

"It is very unpleasant—very awkward!" exclaimed Mr. Watson, rising as he spoke, and taking a few turns across the room. "There are many in this colony beside Mr. Finlay who came against their will, and some of them, as members of the House of Assembly, are admitted at Government House."

"I do not see that that makes it any better," said Mrs. Watson. "The Governor is obliged to act as governor in all things. It is as the Governor of the province that he permits such men to enter his house, where they go, not as private individuals, but as the holders of certain offices."

"And Lady Digby receives them in their official capacity, does she not?"

"Yes; only in that?"

"Apply what you have just been saying to ourselves. There is a great difference between an occasional formal visit and friendly intercourse."

"What do you think, mamma?"

"Just as you do, my dear; but if you wish to have my opinion as to what you should do in this particular case, I should say you will be guided by your husband's wishes."

"Not my *wishes*," said Mr. Watson. "If I consulted those, Jane would not accept this forward invitation. It is a mere matter of business and of necessity."

"Very well; I will say no more about it; the necessity for meeting such people is a consequence of living in Australia. I think, however, I will leave my bracelets at home, lest they should, by some accident, become the property of those who have worn some of another kind!"

"I never heard you speak so severely before, Jane."

"This social evil never came so directly home till now. We have hitherto avoided coming in close contact with it."

"I am sorry this has happened," said Mrs. Malcolm. "I have often thought that those who can choose their associates are to be envied. Men who are engaged in business cannot always do this."

"I would rather not visit at all, than be drawn within a certain circle."

"You could not retire now, Jane, without giving offence to many. Every one knows you are rather fond of visiting, and that has led you farther down an inclined plane than is becoming agreeable. If you retire now, you will have to begin by declining to visit those whose acquaintance is desirable."

"I feel at this moment, that I would rather do that than get into the set, where money is everything. It is not simply the absence of education and refinement among them, but the whole tone of their society, their ideas, conversation, and manners are insufferably vulgar."

"Are you thinking of the 'M.P.,' or some other great man, whom you saw at the last May ball at Government House, standing with part of a chicken on a fork he was holding in an elevated position, occasionally tearing off some of the meat with his teeth?"

"Is that a fact?" enquired Mrs. Malcolm.

"Yes; did Jane never tell you of it? The fellow had had too much champagne, I expect; and then all the native vulgarity shewed itself."

"They ought not to allow such men to hold any responsible position, and then they could not thrust themselves forward as they do, and go everywhere," said Mrs. Watson.

"Who ought not to allow it? There is no one to prevent it. You forget that the people govern the colony, and choose, from among themselves, the men who have the most money and the most impudence, to make laws for them."

"I am sorry for our present Governor," said Mrs. Malcolm. "He is a thorough English gentleman; kind-hearted, gentle, and refined. What a life he must lead, having to meet constantly, and transact business with men utterly unfit to manage anything beyond their own shops."

"Ah!" said Mr. Watson, "that reminds me of something that a man, whom I feel very much inclined to designate, henceforth, as 'Bunkum Bounce,' told me yesterday."

"Who is it?"

"You may guess; he is a very great man now, the 'Head of a Department.' I have known him in the way of business for many years, and till lately, thought very highly of him. I believe he is strictly honourable, and has attained his present position by industry and perseverance. He came to Australia a poor boy; yesterday he told me, with the utmost self-complacency, that he had been telling 'Sandon,' as he familiarly called him, that 'the Governor was an old rascal, and he would never enter Government House again as long as he was in it.'"

"Told Mr. Sandon that ! Do you think it was true? Would anyone say such a thing to the Governor's son-in-law ?"

"Oh, yes. Those men don't care what they say. They have no gentlemanly feeling by nature or education ; no respect for office ; nor sense enough to see that they only render themselves ridiculous by setting up as great men. The Chief Secretary grossly insulted the Governor not long ago, about some money transaction."

"The threat of 'Mr. Bounce,' whoever he may be, that 'he would not enter Government House again,' is the most amusing thing I have heard for some time," said Mrs. Watson.

"I thought so, for it was only two or three years ago that, in his official capacity, he was invited for the first time, and that on a public occasion, to dine at Government House."

"But you have not told us who it is."

"One who since his elevation drives a pair of horses ; calls the Governor's sons by their Christian names ; one in short, who, when he put on the official cloak, lost sight of what was inside of it."

"And in striving after a shadow, is losing the substance," said Mrs. Malcolm.

"Yes; if by that you mean, that in striving after a position he can never attain, he is losing the respect of those who are capable of appreciating the good qualities which have raised him in life, and which are now being incrustated with the tinsel of colonial grandeur, so that soon they will cease to be seen. The ignorance of our great men is surprising. Have you seen the last joke of the season? It appeared in this morning's *Register*."

"No; I seldom look at the paper. There is

nothing worth reading. Who has been lively enough to perpetrate a joke?"

"The Chief Secretary. A week ago Government was applied to, to make the usual arrangements for excursion trains on the occasion of the annual exhibition of the agricultural society. No official announcement of any arrangements appeared in the public journals, and another application was made, which was answered by forwarding a slip of paper cut from the last number of the *Government Gazette*, on which appeared an advertisement of the trains, and all particulars, times of departure, fares, &c."

"What was the use of advertising in the *Gazette*? No one ever looks at that but pound-keepers and magistrates."

"The profound wisdom of the Chief Secretary may enable him to answer your question: I cannot. I would give him the credit of having some reason for what he has done in this little matter of business, only that I know that most of the members of our responsible government never think enough to enable them to give a reason for anything they do or say."

"Mr. Malcolm would not be quite so severe as that."

"He would not say in those words what he thinks," replied Mr. Watson; "but I know his opinion of the men in office, and of the people generally. He thinks as highly of them, and their capacity as legislators and leaders of fashion, as he does of the grammar and spelling of the House of Assembly."

"Papa should never have left England," said Mrs. Watson. "He is so different to almost every

one else. There is Mr. Graham and a few others, whose manners are like his, but they are exceptions."

"Your papa and I have had to submit to much, that in England could not by any possibility have reached us," said Mrs. Malcolm; "but when persons leave their native land to live in one peopled as Australia is, they must, while endeavouring to attain the object they had in view, bear the consequences of the step they have taken. They cannot leave England without leaving behind also, all, or nearly all, that makes England the home of our affections; nor can they reap the advantages, in a pecuniary point of view, of living in a new country, without experiencing its many disadvantages and disagreeables."





CHAPTER X.



HE sun had not long risen, when a roomy but old-fashioned carriage, drawn by a pair of strong bay horses, drew up in front of Mr. Graham's house. A few light packages were placed in it, and Annie Roland was standing on the verandah ready to take her seat on the box.

Mr. Graham came out to give final directions to the coachman,—a steady young man, whom he had advised Mrs. Vernon to engage to look after the horses, and make himself generally useful. She hesitated on the ground of expense. "She intended," she said, "to do without a man servant."

"You are regarding the subject from an English point of view," was Mr. Graham's reply, "I from an Australian one. You will find one such servant indispensable in bush life. However, I admire your independent notions; there can be no greater mistake made, on arriving in a new country, than attempting to live in the same style as persons of a certain class do in the old one."

"I think you may make one exception, Frank," said Mrs. Graham; "it is at least as great a mistake to cast aside, as some do, the habits and manners of civilized life because they live in the bush."

"You are right there, Kate. In cases of that

kind I always conclude that there is a shingle loose."

So James Duncan was engaged, and Mr. Graham thought, when he caught sight of him, with his shrewd good humoured face, hair cropped as short as possible, (as if James thought it would be a long time before he should be under the hands of a barber again,) and the reins in his hand,—that he had for once met with the right man. He was a young cousin of the overseer at Kooroona.

"You have the paper I gave you last night, Duncan?"

"Yes, sir."

"Let me see it. You know the road as far as Toorak?"

"Yes, sir. I know the first hundred miles well."

"Then you remember you must get to Goolara to night; that will give you the shortest stage, forty miles, for the second day. And don't forget to take plenty of water for the horses from Goolara; there is none to be had beyond, at this time of year, till you reach Toorak."

"I'll see to that, sir."

"When you leave Toorak, and enter the scrub, look at your directions. I have made them as plain as I can, and there is only one place where it is possible you can make a mistake. Be careful at that point. There are three tracks branching off. I have marked the one you are to take."

"Remember, we shall want to hear all about our old home. You must all of you write to us," said Mr. Graham, as he closed the door of the carriage. "I shall not excuse you, Edith."

"I have promised to write to Alfred and tell him how I like Kooroona. Will that do, Mr. Graham,

or am I to write to you as well? I will if you like."

"Then do; the more letters the better we shall be pleased. Good-bye, little pet," giving her a parting kiss through the window.

"Right, Duncan!" and the carriage moved off.

Harry had been standing apart with Alfred whose pony he was to ride.

"I am glad you will have Lion, Harry; you and he will have a fine time at Kooroona. It is really very jolly in the bush. I shall know he is taken care of now."

"I shall do that for the sake of his late master," Harry said.

"Poor Lion!" and as Alfred spoke he stroked the long brown mane of his favourite. "He deserves to be liked for his own sake. They are off, Harry! Good-bye."

"Alf.!" said Harry,—and as he spoke there was something very like a tear in his eye,—“I wish you would thank Mr. and Mrs. Graham, I can't.”

He was gone before Alfred could speak.

"Crying, Kate!" said Mr. Graham, on entering the breakfast room.

"I have never met with anyone I like so well as Mrs. Vernon."

"I should say the same of the whole family," replied Mr. Graham. "Harry is a noble boy, in spite of a considerable amount of pride and cayenne."

"It is very disagreeable saying good-bye to those one likes," said Mrs. Graham.

"Yes, about *the* most unpleasant thing in life; but it has to be done. Cheer up, Kate; we have not seen the last of our friends."

"It seems to me that we have. We are going to England, and they will live in Australia."

"For some years; but I am quite sure that living in Australia will never be a matter of choice with either of them. They are not made of the stuff to suit this colony."

"But how are they to leave it? All they have to depend upon is about three thousand pounds, which was settled on Mrs. Vernon and her daughters; and she cannot withdraw that from the English funds."

"You seem to forget Harry."

"No, I don't forget him; and I have no doubt that with the arrangement you have made he will have a few thousand pounds of his own, that is, he will have saved it by the time he is of age; but that would not enable them to return to England."


"It would not enable them to live at the Hermitage. Unless some unforeseen event happens, that will remain in the Carleton family."

"And they would not like to live anywhere else in England, Frank."

"No, they might not like it; but I am very much mistaken if patriotism will not make them feel that a more humble home in England, as soon as they are in a position to secure that, is preferable to living in either of the Australias."

"Well, I hope so; for I don't believe we shall come back here."

"I do not think we shall, Kate. It is just as well to make up our minds to that at once; and in making my arrangements I am acting as if that point were decided. You had better do the same, and we have no time to lose. We must set to work in earnest now."





CHAPTER XI.



T is difficult for those colonists who have never lived anywhere but in the settled districts, or travelled off the main roads, where the mail conveyance has made a distinct track across a plain or through a vast forest, which is sometimes twenty or thirty miles in breadth, to realize the extreme danger of amateur exploring in such a country as Australia.

The many skeletons which have, from time to time, been found in the scrub, as these densely wooded tracts of land are popularly called, attest the folly of it; but reading of such discoveries in a newspaper, when seated under the verandah of a good house, surrounded by gardens and vineyards, is a very different thing from being in the midst of a forest, where no tree is tall enough to enable you to see beyond the thousands that are growing around; where dwarf shrubs are sometimes so thick as to impede your progress, and where you know that there is no possibility of meeting with water.

There is little chance of a person, once fairly lost in a scrub, consisting of she-oaks, native cherries, and the smaller kinds of mallee, interspersed with tea tree and the brushwood which grows luxuriantly among them, ever finding his

way out. It is the absence of water which makes travelling in Australia dangerous. Man can live where there is water. There, if no white man goes, the native does, and he never loses himself. He knows all the water-holes and all the creeks. From one to another of these, he wanders through the year; and where a white man would be lost, the black man will, with unerring precision, and in a straight line, traverse his native forests, with nothing that the white man can see or understand to guide him.

And, as a rule, the white man need not fear to meet with the native Australian in his own wilds. He will give him a seat by his wood fire, and the shelter of his wurley, and he will be his guide through the forest, unless the white man has previously injured him or one of his tribe. If he have done that, he must pay the penalty; for the black man will have his revenge as well as the white man, unless fear or some other motive restrain him. Revenge is a virtue among savages. It always was and always will be, from the mere fact that it is natural to fallen man. The colour of the skin makes no difference. It is only Christians in *deed* who return good for evil. The civilized professor and the untaught savage are, in one sense, on the same level, with this difference prospectively, that "that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

In some parts of Australia, those portions of it



which are within reach of the majority of the colonists, one may travel for a hundred miles and not see a single thing worth describing. So thought Mrs. Vernon, on the evening of the second day, as she sat in the only private room which a small bush inn at Toorak afforded. It served as sitting and sleeping room for herself and daughters. The heat had been intense during the day, and part of the route lay over a sandy plain, at the foot of a range of stony hills. There were the beds of mountain torrents, but they were dry; and the courses of creeks were rendered almost impassable by reason of the pieces of rock which the winter rains brought down from the hills. Harry had more than one hearty laugh at sight of the carriage tumbling over the stones. Once during the day they appeared to be approaching a large lake. The water looked clear and blue, and the first thought that struck Mrs. Vernon was, that they must be on a wrong route, as Mr. Graham would certainly have mentioned such a sheet of water as that which was before them. It was but the mirage of the desert, and soon the illusion vanished as suddenly as it appeared.

The scenery changed as they approached Toorak. A belt of lofty gum trees and pines stretched across the country, and all were so exhausted from the heat, that as Duncan said he had some water in the bags, and a halt there would not interfere with the last day's journey, it was decided to camp under the shade of the trees for a few hours, starting again so as to reach Toorak before sundown.

Humble as was the little bush inn, half hostelry, half farmhouse, Mrs. Vernon was glad to reach it,

and as she looked from the window of her room at the seemingly interminable forest through which they had to travel the next day, she experienced a feeling of relief and thankfulness, as the thought crossed her mind that beyond that forest was her home, new and untried it may be, but still a home for herself and her children.

"What time will you like to start, ma'am?" enquired Duncan, after attending to his horses. "We've over fifty miles to go to-morrow."

"As soon as it is light, Duncan."

"Very good. The horses must have a good spell on the road. I've filled the water bags, and you'd better take more with you, ma'am, than you had to-day. I've got the promise of a bottle of goat's milk, if you'd like that."

"Thank you, Duncan, it will be very useful."

A south-west wind was blowing when the travellers started, promising to make the journey through the scrub more agreeable than it could otherwise be during the summer months. Half the distance was accomplished, and Duncan who had carefully studied his chart of the road, at the point where the other tracks branched off, received confirmation that they were on the right one, from two bushmen, who, with pistols in their belts, and mounted on horses that had never been under the hands of a training master, rode by, while he was preparing to start on the last stage.

"Going to Kooroona, are you? All you have to do is to go straight on along this track; there is but one fork."

"There," said Duncan, taking out his paper, "and the one we have to go is marked."

"That is right. You can't make a mistake if

you attend to that," said the stranger, as he returned the paper to Duncan, after looking carefully at it. He raised his cap as he passed Mrs. Vernon, who was standing with Isabelle and Edith at a short distance from the carriage, and at whom his companion had been staring so uncereemoniously, while he had been answering Duncan's enquiry, as to heighten the colour on Isabelle's cheeks considerably. She turned away, and as she did so her foot caught against the stump of a tree and she fell. Before she had regained her feet the stranger had thrown himself from his horse, and had struck something close to her with his riding whip. Then followed the report of a pistol, and she saw within a yard of her a huge brown snake, writhing in agony, but attempting to rise and attack the first he could reach. Another blow with the butt end of the pistol broke its back, and the reptile was soon despatched.

"I am afraid I alarmed you, but you fell so close to that snake, which was moving when I caught sight of it, that I feared you had touched it, and they are not safe as close companions."

"Thank you. I was a little frightened. Indeed I am very much obliged to you."

"Are you hurt, dear?" asked Mrs Vernon.

"No, mamma. It is very foolish to be so frightened at nothing," she added, her voice trembling as she spoke. "I did touch that snake. I saw it just as my hand came down upon something cold and clammy."

She looked at the stranger and he smiled.

"I scarcely deserve such thanks," he said, more in answer to Isabelle's glance, than to the warm thanks to which Mrs. Vernon was giving utterance.

"We so often meet with snakes in the bush, especially at particular seasons of the year, that we are used to these encounters. They never attack anyone unless interfered with."

"I shall never forget your kindness," said Mrs. Vernon.

The stranger answered by again raising his cap, and walked quickly to the assistance of his companion, who had some difficulty in managing his own horse, and holding the bridle of the other, so as to prevent its running away.

"Quite an adventure, Percy! That was a pretty girl you picked up."

"I didn't pick her up. She got up herself. I only killed the snake that would have bitten her in another moment, if I had not diverted his attention."

"By doing which you diverted her's to yourself; for I saw her looking at you with no end of gratitude and all that sort of thing expressed in her face. She turned away when I was admiring her."

"If I caught you looking at a sister of mine, as you sat looking at that girl we have just left, I should be very likely, Jack, to let you feel the force of my hand."

"Well! she wasn't your sister, so you have no excuse for knocking me down," replied the other, laughing.

"You colonial chaps should go to England to learn manners."

"Thank you; but if a fellow can't look at a pretty girl in England I'd rather stay in Australia."

"Oh! as for looking at them, you know what I mean, Jack, or you ought to know. There are two ways of doing everything, and two sorts of

people. Those we have just seen were not born and brought up in Australia, or my name isn't Arthur Percy."

"Well, it's no use mooning along at this rate; let us gallop on."

"As fast as you like," said Percy; "but we shall reach Toorak in good time."

When Harry returned from the opposite side of one of the picturesque glades which are so common in the bush, whither he had gone in pursuit of a beautiful lizard, he found all ready for starting, and Duncan very anxious to lose no time, lest, as he said, "something *should* happen." Edith began immediately to tell Harry about the snake and the man who killed it.

"A gentleman in disguise," said Mrs. Vernon smiling.

"I never saw a gentleman in such funny clothes, mamma."

"No; because you have never travelled in Australia before."

"He did speak like a gentleman," said Edith.

"And looked and acted like one," replied Mrs. Vernon.

"It is very strange," she continued; "he reminded me of some face I have seen before, whose I cannot remember. I wish you had seen him, Harry."

Harry did not hear the last remark. The track was narrow, and he and Lion had to fall into the rear.





CHAPTER XII.



“**H**ERE we are,” said Duncan, pulling up his horses, as he caught sight of a second track through the scrub, which they had entered about an hour before, after travelling for some miles across a barren flat. “We shall be at Kooroona in good time, ma’am. The gentleman said this was only six miles off.”

“Six o’clock ;” said Harry, looking at his watch. “Which road do we take, Duncan ?”

“Tell you directly, sir,” putting his hand in his pocket. The paper Mr. Graham had given to him was not there. He searched first one pocket, then another, with similar success. The carriage was searched, but in vain. It could not be found. Poor Duncan looked as he felt, utterly dismayed. He knew he had the paper safe just before starting from their camping place in the “Long Scrub,” as he called it; he had not wanted to refer to it since, and it became evident that as he was putting it hastily into his pocket, when he heard the report of the pistol, which slightly startled one of the horses, he must have let it slip outside the pocket of his coat instead of into it. He could not remember which road was marked, but thought it was the one to the left. Harry thought it was the other. Mrs. Vernon began to blame herself for not looking at

the directions for their journey; and Harry proposed riding on for a few miles and returning with some certain intelligence.

"I can guess about six miles by the time; and if no house is in sight then, we shall know that the other is the road we must take."

"I could not consent to that, Harry; we must all keep together. The sun will have set long before you could be back."

"Then what are we to do?"

"Let us follow the track that appears to be the most used, and hope it will turn out to be the right one," said Mrs. Vernon.

They drove on for an hour. Nothing appeared before them but interminable scrub. Duncan suddenly stopped.

"I expect we are right, ma'am," he said. "Look at that," pointing as he spoke to a footprint in the sand.

Mrs. Vernon leaned forward.

"That is the print of a man's foot, and there is another of a smaller one."

"Yes; that's the footmark of a lubra," said Duncan. "Those are tracks of the natives. Dare say they were going to the house."

Duncan spoke and looked more cheerful than he had done since the discovery of his loss. He said nothing, but he knew that his horses were becoming exhausted, and that his water bags were empty. They travelled on slowly for another half-hour. It was nearly dark. A light shone through the trees, and in a few moments they found themselves in an open glade of the forest, on one side of which was an encampment of natives. A loud, unintelligible cry was raised, and most of the men started

to their feet as the carriage came in sight. A number of kangaroo-dogs rushed from the wurleys, barking and howling, but were quickly called off by the blacks.

Harry rode up among them, and forgetting for a moment that black men do not speak English, he asked, "how far it was to Kooroona."

There were between twenty and thirty men and women, besides a number of piccaninnies of all ages; and the large black eyes of all of them were fixed upon Harry, who, pleased with the novelty of the scene, smiled as he looked round. His smile was answered by a hearty laugh from each of them; as hearty as it was discordant, and as the thick hideous lips parted, they disclosed rows of glittering white teeth, which civilized nations might envy.

Kooroona was the only word uttered by Harry, which was understood by the majority; but on his repeating his question, a number of black fingers pointed in an opposite direction to the one they had been travelling. He returned to the carriage with the information he had gathered.

"Then there is nothing to be done but to make the best of our position," said Mrs. Vernon. "We shall have to stop here all night."

"The blacks will give us water," said Duncan, who was thinking of his horses and the hard day's work they had done. "They always camp near it."

"Are you sure they won't hurt us, Duncan?" said Edith.

"No fear, miss. They never do any harm if they're let alone. They're lazy. That's the worst I know of them."

"The first thing to be done," said Mrs. Vernon,

"is to ask them if we may stay here for the night ; that will show that we trust them. I wish we had something to give them, but all our provisions are gone except a few biscuits. There will be no breakfast till we get to Kooroona."

"Never mind, mamma. I am glad it is no worse. I had rather we met with the blacks than not. We cannot lose ourselves now, and that is the only thing I am afraid of," said Isabelle. "May I go with Harry and speak to them?"

"You had better keep at a little distance," said Harry, "their outfit appears to be on a very limited scale. Opossum rugs seem to be the only covering they condescend to wear."

"They're sure to have clothes of some sort tied up in their nets," said Duncan. "You'll see, sir, in the morning they'll all have something on."

"What do they carry nets about with them for? I have seen no water since we left Adelaide ; they cannot want them for fishing."

"They catch wild animals with nets. They tie them together and fasten them to trees, and then go to some distance, and either beat the scrub as they go on, driving everything before them, or set fire to the trees. That's the cause of many of the bush fires."

"Hollo !" said Harry, "one gentleman has visited his wardrobe."

"Water," said Duncan, pointing to the horses, as the black man approached the carriage. He was a tall, intelligent looking young man, and replied in very tolerable English.

"What you got to fetch it in?"

Duncan produced his water bags, which the Australian looked at earnestly, and then exclaimed,—

“Ah! them good, very good. Me get water; know big one hole. Koonid!”

A woman who was seated near one of the fires on an opossum rug, which was partially wrapped round her, and from the folds of which appeared the little black head of a child, looked round. Rather unwillingly, as it appeared, she got up in obedience to order, and throwing her rug over her shoulders came forward. The man gave her one of the bags.

Harry took it from her, and turning to the man said laughingly,—

“You black fellows make the women work?”

“Yes; they work and carry piccaninny.

“Well, I’ll go with you for the water. How far is it?”

“Little way off in the scrub.”

“You will not mind my going away?” addressing Mrs. Vernon in a low tone.

“Why not stay, and let Duncan go?”

“I would rather go myself, if you don’t mind, and he can unharness those poor animals that look ready to drop.”

“Very well, Harry; do as you like.”

He set off with his sable guide, and one or two others came from the wurleys and joined them. In less than a quarter of an hour they returned, bringing a plentiful supply of water, of which all stood as much in need as the horses did.

Isabelle and Edith got out of the carriage, and talked to some of the children, who, attracted by curiosity, had followed Koonid. The talking was, however, all on one side; not a word did the little natives understand, though they seemed to know instinctively that kindness was intended, returned

the smiles that greeted them with interest, and laughed heartily as they received a gentle pat on the cheek or shoulder. Koonid could say a few words of English, and perhaps understood more of what was said to her than Mrs. Vernon thought she did; for these poor Australians, whose capacities for learning are so much underrated, are wonderfully quick of comprehension, and remember accurately everything once seen or heard, though, unfortunately for themselves, they do not use this talent for their own benefit.

Harry, on his return, found Mrs. Vernon lamenting with Isabelle on the impossibility of making the people understand that they had nothing which they could give them.

"Oh! Wahreep will do that for you; he is a first-rate fellow. Here, Wahreep!"

"I am very sorry we have no food to give you," Mrs. Vernon began.

"We had supper; plenty wallaby and kangaroo. You like 'im tail?"

"What tail—kangaroo's?"

"Yes; white fellow like that. Me take kangaroo tail to Mis'r Graham. You know Mis'r Graham?"

"Yes."

"And 'im lubra, and Mis'r Alfred?"

"Yes."

"Ya! them good people, very good. Me work for Mis'r Graham; Koonid wash, and Mis'r Graham's lubra give her clothes. Mis'r Alfred go hunt with black fellow; he catch wallaby and shoot 'em birds."

"Well, you bring Koonid to see me. Is that yours?" pointing to the child on Koonid's back, who was peeping over her shoulder.

"Yes ; that my piccaninny."

"What is its name?"

"Alfred."

Mrs. Vernon smiled as she enquired, "How old is Alfred?"

"Don't know," said Wahreep. Then slowly counting his fingers, he added, "Eleven moons."

"Will you bring Alfred to Kooroona?" said Edith, who seemed to have taken a great fancy to the black children generally.

"Yes ; and me bring kangaroo tail."

"They'll come without asking, ma'am, after this," said Duncan, who had been within hearing.

Mrs. Vernon said a few words to Harry, who, turning to Wahreep, asked him to take the woman and children back to the wurleys, as they were all tired with their day's journey. In a moment they were all gone, and an hour afterwards the black encampment was as silent as the grave, the fires were dying out, and Mrs. Vernon was the only watcher of her own party. No fear of those with whom she had so unexpectedly been brought in contact kept her awake ; but she knew that nothing happens by chance, that every event of life has its results of good or evil, and she was asking herself what she could do for those who had just given to her in her need the best they had. She was a stranger in the black man's land ; she had heard from Mr. Graham that the so-called Christian Government of South Australia ignored, as far as possible, the existence of the native inhabitants, regarding them and treating them as a degraded race, doomed to die out before the white man. What he said on the subject, and he said much when he had once entered upon it, was not forgotten, though, at the time, it did not

produce a deep impression. Mrs. Vernon's chief thoughts and anxiety were concentrated just then upon the future prospects of herself and her children; but now that a settled course was before them, and they had simply to work and wait in the path which Mr. Graham had marked out for them, she remembered all he had told her of the neglected, ill-treated Australians, and her meeting them at the very commencement of her bush life made her feel that henceforth one part of her duty would be doing something for them; what that something would be assumed no definite form; the future was all obscurity for herself and for them. Time must develop how far hopes and visions of good deeds could be embodied in action.

Harry awoke the next morning just in time to see most of the men, armed with spears and waddies, go off for the day's hunting. Two or three carried boomerangs; the dogs followed them, and, with the exception of Wahreep, who was to be the guide to Kooroona, and one or two grey-headed old men, the wurleys were occupied by women and children only, when Mrs. Vernon and her daughters were roused by Harry looking in at the carriage window, and announcing that the sun was above the horizon.

"We shall have to eat wallaby if we stay here much longer," he said.

Two hours' drive brought them to Kooroona. Mrs. Vernon's first thoughts on reaching it were not of its beauty or its comforts, but of the kindness that had given her such a home.





CHAPTER XIII.



N. the early part of 1865, a young man sprang from the deck of a small steamer on the jetty of a flourishing little seaport town, situate on the north-west coast of Grant's Peninsula. He might have been thirty years of age, perhaps a year or two younger. His face and hands were bronzed by exposure to sun and wind, but the long taper fingers scarcely looked as if they had done much work, and as he raised his cabbage-tree hat, and passed them through his dark hair, a massive ring, in which glittered one large sapphire, contrasted curiously with his general attire, which was of the plainest and roughest kind. A thick dark moustache partially hid the mouth, but the rest of the features seemed to indicate that it would be firmly though delicately formed ; while the high brow spoke of as much intellectual power, as the full chest and broad shoulders (which suited well his unusual height) did of physical strength.

He threw a small valise down at his feet, and, folding his arms, looked around.

The bay was beautiful, with deep water close to the shore. The little town presented no attractions to the eye of a traveller. It is, like all other towns in Australia, new, unfinished. Houses of rubble-masonry, interspersed with pine-huts and small weather-board cottages, generally detached and

destitute of all shade ; for the first thing which the settlers in a new district do is invariably to cut down and destroy every tree and shrub within reach, and having done that, they begin to grumble about the barren, desolate appearance of the place, and to complain of the dust and of the glare of the sun, without ever thinking that they have helped to raise the one and increase the other. Having destroyed all the native trees and bush flowers, which, suited to the soil and the climate, grow luxuriantly, they begin to plant foreign ones, and, with amusing simplicity, wonder how it is that the trees which grow in England, or in moist, tropical regions, will not thrive in a dry, arid, sandy country like that of Grant's Peninsula, and blame nature and nature's God, instead of their own want of forethought.

"Wonderful place, sir !" said a man, covered with coal dust. "A very few years ago there was nothing in these parts but sheep and a pine hut for the shepherd."

"So I have heard," replied the stranger. "The sheep and the black man had the run of the land till copper was found. Which is the best inn here?"

"The 'Wheatsheaf' is the best ; anyone will tell you where to find it."

"Thank you ;" and the stranger, taking up his valise, left the jetty.

A few hours later, Arthur Percy, for it was he whom we have introduced to the reader, was seated in one of the public rooms at the "Wheatsheaf" reading a newspaper, or, rather, he appeared to be reading it, for, though his eyes were fixed upon the paper, his attention was absorbed by a conversation which was carried on by two persons, who had

a diagram on the table before them. Though both were equally interested in the subject under discussion, they were men of a very different stamp. One was past the meridian of life; his hair was grey, and his manner, appearance, and entire bearing denoted an English gentleman. There was a restless, furtive glance in the blue eye, which is never seen in that of a man sure of himself and his position, and there was a curve about the nostril and the mouth which would have prevented a physiognomist placing implicit faith and trust in anyone who had such indications of character well defined. But Arthur Percy was not a physiognomist, and when he occasionally glanced towards the speakers, he saw in the one a fine type of his own countrymen, with a handsome, kind, genial face, and in the other a specimen of mankind with which he had, until that moment, no knowledge whatever; there was servility in his manner, cunning and deceit in the eye and mouth, the head was heavy, and the neck thick.

"Well! what do you think, Mr. Burton, will it do?"

"There can be no question about it. I was sure it would turn out as it has done. There cannot be two opinions; I have examined the place, and I consider that there are indications of a first-rate lode."

"It looks very keenly, and the country is promising; the lower we get the better it is."

"Ah! it is all right; eh, Captain?"

Captain! soliloquized Mr. Percy; the place seems to be peopled with captains; that is the fifth fellow I have heard addressed as captain since I landed; a queer lot they would be on parade.

"There can be no doubt about this being the same lode as Robinson's on the great mine ; I have traced it through the sections ; we must be on it." And Mr. Burton, as he spoke, adjusted his eyeglass, and again looked at the diagram.

There was an odd little twinkle observable in Captain Treloar's eyes, as he sat stiffly on his chair with a hand placed on each knee, while his head and shoulders were jerked quickly in different directions as he addressed his companion.

"Will you draw up a prospectus?" he enquired.

"Certainly—with pleasure. We have discovered a most valuable property ; we have done enough to prove it, and now all we want is money to carry on the work. We will offer half the shares on liberal terms to the public, and—"

"Better throw more into the market than that ; they will all be taken up at a small sum."

"No ; it is a bona fide concern, and we must reserve half."

"Well, certainly, we need not keep all we reserve. I have something else to see to, and must go now. When will you draw up the prospectus?"

"Immediately. I will set about it at once. It will be ready for you to look over as early as you like in the morning."

Mr. Percy laid down the newspaper as Captain Treloar left the room, and remarked, "This is a rich mining district. From the conversation I have heard, you have made a recent discovery?"

"Yes ; a most valuable one. It is impossible to say what it may be worth. There is copper in every direction on this peninsula. You have only just arrived?"

"Only landed on the peninsula to-day. I have

been knocking about in the bush for some years and am tired of it. I thought I would come here for a change, and see about copper mining."

"A man only wants a little money to begin with, and he may soon make a large fortune here. He has only to be cautious."

And Mr. Burton, who was very excitable, and possessed not an atom of caution himself, looked grave and important for a moment, but the genial expression, which seemed the natural one, soon returned, and he courteously informed Mr. Percy that he had been a resident on the peninsula for some time, and should be happy to give him any information, and introduce him, if he wished it, to some of the mining authorities.


"Thank you. I want to see all I can while I am here. How do they set about hunting for copper,—finding these lodes that they talk about?"

"In different ways. The great mine, you know, was a purely accidental discovery,—a shepherd found some bits of green carbonate on the surface of the ground in the midst of scrub. In this case we ascertained the course of a lode, which is turning out an enormous quantity of rich ore, commenced costeening in a section we have secured, and have hit upon the right place; green stains are plentiful, and we have found gossan and steatite. Here," diving into one of his pockets, "is a specimen of what we have cut; beautiful gossan that."

Mr. Percy examined it, but failed to discover any beauty in it, and laid it down, smiling as he did so.

"Ah," said Mr. Burton, "you are a novice; you don't understand the value of that."

"No; I don't profess to know anything about it. I see nothing beautiful in it."



"Nor in that, I suppose?" replied Mr. Burton, bringing from the depths of his pocket a piece of white, soapy looking stone.

"Certainly not."

"We call that steatite. That is the father of copper, sir; the *father* of copper. This is lovely steatite," he continued, raising his eye-glass, and examining it carefully. "See, there is a faint stain of green."

Mr. Percy looked for the green stain; in fact, he tried hard to see it, in order to oblige his new acquaintance, but his laudable endeavours were an utter failure. He could not trace the faintest tinge of the emerald hue, and was obliged to confess his singular incapacity.

"It must be a kind of invisible green," he said, as he laid the steatite on the table.

"Oh, no. Oh dear, no; nothing of the kind. Yours is an unpractised eye. Those two specimens, which are valueless in your estimation, are sure indications of a rich lode. We may reasonably expect to find any amount of copper, when we get deep enough. There it is,—reaching it is only a question of time. I am going to make some farther observations to-morrow, and shall be glad of your company if you feel disposed to judge for yourself. I can shew you that we must be on Robinson's lode."

"Very well; I will go. I suppose I can get a horse?"

"Yes; there is no difficulty about that. I shall be engaged till ten or eleven. After then we can start at any time."

"How far have we to go?"

"A little over twelve miles."

When Captain Treloar left the "Wheatsheaf," he walked quickly in the direction of a small cottage, where two men were waiting for him.

"All settled, Captain?" said one of them, as Treloar entered an untidy looking room, filled with the fumes of tobacco.

"Yes; the prospectus will be ready for printing to-morrow."

"The sooner the better; you know all things are uncertain in this world."

"Except your preaching, Penwartha. Did you go in strong at the prayer-meeting this evening?"

"It would have been better for you, Jack, if you'd 'a come to chapel instead of going to the public."

"That's as you think, Pen. When I take to prayer-meetings I shall leave off some other things."

"What d'ye mean by that?"

"Well, some things don't agree together. You see I ain't quite sure we'er on the lode, but we'er going to say we are, to get money."

"But we don't know that we are *not* on the lode," said Treloar, who in addition to being a mining captain, was a constant attendant at class-meetings, tea-fights, love-feasts, and revivals; "if we are, we are all right."

"And if we'er not, we'er all wrong," said Jack, laughing, as he took his pipe from his mouth."

"Not at all, Jack; the company will be formed and the shares sold."

"Yes; that's what we want; we don't care for the rest. All the difference is, I can't pray over it. Oil and water won't mix noways. So, it's all right, you say?"

"Yes. You are not to do any more costeening; it is all favourable for getting up a venture now."

"And it may not be if we go any further; very good, Cap'n." Jack laughed again, louder than before.

"Just stop that. You're in the concern as well as others, and needn't laugh at your betters," said Penwartha.

"Would'nt laugh at 'em, if I could see 'em, on no account. I'll tell you what, Pen.; it's no good preaching and praying at the same time as we may be cheating folks as don't know as much as us Cornish chaps do."

"What d'ye call it cheating for? We don't know it isn't Robinson's lode."

"We don't know for sartain it is, but we make bold to say so, and I've no objections. I want money, and I see no perticler harm in saying it is, when it might be; so I go in for it, and so do you; only while the Cap'n's putting things straight you go to prayer-meeting, and I stay away and get a nobbler."

At eight o'clock the next morning, Captain Treloar knocked at the door of Mr. Burton's sleeping apartment, and was speedily admitted. That gentleman had his desk open, and several papers were scattered about on the table. He seemed to be in high spirits, like a man at the commencement of a pleasant journey with brilliant prospects before him.

"I think this will do," he said. "I have arranged it all, and I shall soon get it into form:—

"BUNKUMGORUM MINING VENTURE.

4,000 Shares at £5 each.

2,000 retained by the promoters as paid-up shares. Other 2,000 offered to the public on the following terms,—Five

Shillings on Application, Fifteen Shillings on Allotment, the remainder in Monthly Calls, not exceeding Five Shillings each. Cash Bonus of £250 to each of the Original Proprietors. Application for shares to the Secretary, in the usual form, received till noon on Wednesday week, when the shares will be allotted. First applicants to have the preference. N.B.—Ore bags wanted."

"Ah!" exclaimed Captain Treloar, "that last is a good idea. Do you think you have said enough? There is nothing about the value of it."

"I have it all here in the rough,—valuable property, liberal terms, &c.; but it won't do to say too much. Beside the bonus, we have five hundred free shares each."

"Most of the people who rush into mining ventures never think anything about those. I shall write to my broker, give him a few hints, and promise a liberal per centage, and we shall have the shares at a premium in no time. Of course I shall sell immediately, and buy in again when the price falls, which it will do while they are sinking the shaft."

"Then it will do," said Mr. Burton, who had been looking over his notes, while Treloar was building castles in the air.

"Yes; we shall have a nice little round sum whether we find copper or not. Eh, Mr. Burton?"

"We must find copper; there can be no doubt of it, Treloar. I believe it to be a most valuable property; I do, indeed. It is absurd to suppose for a moment that there is not a rich deposit below that gossan and steatite. There is the breakfast bell!" and Mr. Burton began to gather up his papers.

"You won't delay that?" said Treloar.

"Not a day. I shall make a fair copy for the printer immediately after breakfast."



CHAPTER XIV.




WHEN Arthur Percy arrived on Grant's Peninsula, with the comfortable assurance of having a deposit at his banker's of a few thousand pounds made by sheep farming, he had a firm impression on his mind that in a perfectly legitimate way he should be able to double his capital in a short time, and then he thought he would return to England. That impression was produced by the newspaper reports of the wonderful discoveries of rich lodes

which were made almost daily on the Peninsula. The quantity and quality of the ore that was met with, wherever a spade or pick disturbed the surface soil, were alike fabulous. It was becoming a question with some thoughtful men in Adelaide, whether there would be room for the miners and their families to live, or whether it would be possible for a man to leave work, after nightfall, in one mine, without tumbling down a shaft into another, and coming to an untimely end by breaking his head against rocks of green carbonates, or being smothered in unfathomable depths of black ore, yielding 99½ per cent.—often considerably more—of pure copper. Piles of ore in bags awaiting shipment were supposed to reach as high as the Pyramids of Egypt or the Tower of Babel. Every man was becoming a

Croesus ; and it was the creed of the Adelaide share-brokers, mining captains, and others on the Peninsula of a highly imaginative, speculative turn of mind, that every stone with a green stain upon it, no matter where it came from, converted the spot on which it rested into an extremely valuable property, which the discoverers, in the true spirit of philanthropy, and in the most disinterested manner, offered to the public. Their generosity and consideration for those who were obliged by adverse circumstances to live far away from this second El Dorado were unbounded ; while their utter renunciation of self, and their extraordinary liberality in giving up untold wealth for the smallest consideration, were beyond all praise.

Of all the discoveries made, none promised to be more valuable than that of Bunkumgorum. The anticipations of the promoters were fully realized. All the shares offered to the public were eagerly bought up. Men were set to work to sink a shaft ; each report of the captain was more favourable than the last ; the "country" was improving ; indications most satisfactory ; and from time to time telegrams were sent to Town for the information of those shareholders who had no opportunity of seeing and judging for themselves. Each telegram raised the price of shares, and Captain Treloar became anxious to purchase as many as he could get ; which, in the opinion of many was conclusive evidence that the Bunkumgorum mine would soon be equal in value to anything yet discovered. Treloar was a practical man ; understood all about mining, and probably knew more than others did. So argued Arthur Percy, who, during the six months he had been on the Peninsula, had lessened very considerably the deposit at his bankers. However, his money was



better invested ; he held valuable scrip instead of bank-notes or mortgage-deeds ; scrip which he could convert into money at any moment, but which would, he expected, and Mr. Burton assured him positively that he was fully justified in indulging such expectations, be worth ten times the amount he paid for it, in a few months' time. He had purchased shares in many new ventures, and a large proportion of Mr. Burton's original five hundred in the Bunkumgorum. Mr. Burton was very unwilling to part with them ; indeed he seemed very much annoyed that he could not retain his full interest in the concern, but he had so many calls to meet that he must make some sacrifice, and that being the case, his friend Percy may as well benefit by it as a stranger. Mr. Percy thought so too, and felt that he was really indebted to Mr. Burton for giving him such a favourable opportunity of realizing a large fortune without any trouble.

One morning a rough-looking man dashed up to the "Wheatsheaf." He was dressed in miner's costume, and had evidently come from under ground, mounted his horse, and ridden off at a moment's notice. He was breathless and exhausted from the tremendous speed at which he had travelled, and the horse was panting and foaming at the mouth.

"Was Mr. Burton at home ?"

"Yes."

"I want to see him directly."

"There he is," as Mr. Burton issued from an opposite door.

A dirty-looking envelope was hastily thrust into his hand by the miner.

"Ah ! Here, my good fellow, you want something to drink : you had better order some dinner ;" and as Mr. Burton spoke he folded up the paper he

had glanced over, and slipped a bank-note into the man's hand.

"Thank you, sir."

Mr. Burton looked round, and then hastily re-entered the room from which he had emerged a moment before, and carefully closed the door. Mr. Percy was writing at one end of a long table.

"They have cut ore."

"Where?" said Mr. Percy, looking up and throwing down his pen.

"At Bunkumgorum. I knew they would; the shares will be worth ten pounds each immediately,"

"I have a great mind to telegraph for a few more."

"I wish I could," said Mr. Burton, who was becoming very much excited. "You know the news cannot be kept quiet long; some one will hear of it. There will be immense excitement in Adelaide on the arrival of the first telegram; the price of shares will be up immediately."

"Let me see," said Mr. Percy, throwing himself back in his chair, stretching his legs under the table, and folding his arms; "three-pound-ten paid up—selling at five!"

"You must lose no time; every moment is of consequence. If you don't get possession of the wires immediately you will have some one before you. I only wish I could telegraph for some."

"Of course I shall give you half of what I gain by this transaction," said Percy, "because it is through you I have this information. I think I will have another hundred."

They walked towards the telegraph office. Just before they reached it Mr. Burton suddenly paused.

"Do you want information as to the value of any other shares?"

"No ; what made you think of that, then ?"

"If you do want to know anything, it might be well to send the message as soon as you have despatched the order for these shares. We should gain a little time, which is sometimes of great importance in these cases."

"I will take my chance in that way," replied Mr. Percy.

The telegram was sent, and in less than two hours an answer was returned to the effect that the hundred shares had been secured.

Before the scrip arrived from Adelaide the excitement on the Peninsula, about the splendid ore which had been found at Bunkumgorum, had subsided. A slight mistake had been made. It was mundic, instead of 50 per cent. copper, that had been cut ; but it was not of the least consequence, Mr. Burton said.

"Mundic always rides a good horse. We must wait a little while."

When the scrip was delivered, Mr. Percy was not a little surprised to find that he possessed a hundred of Captain Treloar's shares.

"This is very strange ; I don't understand it."

"Anything the matter ?" enquired Mr. Burton, looking up from a newspaper.

"Why, Treloar is selling his shares. It was only the other day I heard him say he should buy all he could get."

"You will be overheard if you speak so loudly."

"Don't care if I am ; what difference can it make ? I have bought this scrip and Treloar has sold it. Why, I should like to know."

"It is as well to be cautious in speaking of these things," said Mr. Burton, rising as he spoke, and

closing the door of the room in which they were sitting. "It will not tend to keep up the price of shares for it to be generally known that Treloar is selling."

"Why is he selling? That is what I want to know."

"Probably he wants money to buy into something else."


"Do you know that he does?" and Percy as he asked the question looked full at Mr. Burton.

"Oh, no; it is only a supposition of mine. He speculates in everything."

"But if he thinks so well of this mine, why part with his interest in it, just when you are advising me to buy in? However, I suppose he knows his own business best. Perhaps he had some sudden call to meet, and could realize on this scrip more readily than by other means."

"Most likely," said Mr. Burton, relieved, apparently, by this view of the case. "The Bunkum-gorum stands high in the estimation of the public."

It is not an unusual thing for some serious thoughts to cross the minds of those who are generally light-hearted and little given to reviewing the past if they happen to be alone on the last day of the year. The weather had been unusually hot and oppressive for some time; the thermometer ranging from 98° to 113° in the shade and as high as 157° in the sun. No rain had fallen since the latter end of August. Often the air was darkened by dense clouds of dust; and as, after a long siesta, Arthur Percy rose and looked out from the window of his room at the "Wheatsheaf," he thought that there might be a more desirable place for a man to live than Grant's Peninsula. Then came the conviction



that he had been there quite long enough ; much longer than he had any idea of staying when he landed. In short he was tired of it and had been for some months, but he seemed to realize the fact for the first time, as he remembered that in a few hours the year 1865 would be a thing of the past.

He stepped out on the balcony, lighted a cigar, and taking possession of an American rocking-chair, began to think seriously of the state of his affairs. Bunkumgorum was still a promising mine. The Captain's reports were of such a nature as to prevent anyone parting with shares who could afford to hold them ; and so it was with two or three other mines in which he had invested considerable sums of money. The shares too were not saleable at the price he had given for them, and he was not disposed to sell at a loss, when all the captains and proprietors, who must be better judges than he was, assured him that finding copper was but a question of time, and that every day they might break into a rich deposit, which would enable the shareholders to realize a large profit upon any shares they chose to sell ; while the remainder might be kept as a permanent investment. Mr. Burton, though he acknowledged that he was disappointed, and expected that copper would have been found sooner, still thought Bunkumgorum would soon be a dividend-paying mine ; and Mr. Percy, as he rocked himself slowly to and fro, came to the conclusion that it was "a consummation devoutly to be wished," for he had sunk much more in mining shares than he had ever intended to do, and he was beginning to have some slight misgivings as to the wisdom of the course he had pursued. The result of his meditation was that he would change his quarters, and live at

Mooganna for a month or two. He would then be more immediately on the spot where he had staked so much, and if he found that no improvement was taking place he would sell his shares and go. That he was determined upon.

It is curious to observe how suddenly an illusion that has been cherished for months as a substantial reality will sometimes vanish ; a single breath is sufficient to sweep all away. Arthur Percy's aërial fabric had not disappeared by any means, it appeared to be at a greater distance, and some parts of it were crumbling, or rather fading away ; but he was not at all prepared to admit that in striving after a shadow he was losing the substance, though he did mutter to himself as he threw away the end of his cigar, " I believe I have been a great fool."





CHAPTER XV.



THE close of a hot day, towards the end of February, in the same year that the enterprising promoters of the great Bunkumgorum Mining Venture conferred an inestimable benefit on the country of their adoption, by disinterestedly distributing almost all the shares in their valuable property to the general public, for small inconsiderable cash payments, two Cornish miners might have been seen engaged in earnest conversation at one extremity of what is now known as the "Salt-water Flat." That flat was, two years previously, a grassy hollow between hills, which were covered with trees, and, during the rainy season, with innumerable bush flowers. Those hills were then gardens of the desert, and the now barren flat, a green glade in the forest ; but the trees and flowers soon disappeared before the miners and their flocks of goats ; the grass was destroyed by the brackish water pumped up from the great Mooganna mine ; and on the evening referred to, barren sand-hills and miners' cottages alone met the eye.

The two men may have been talking together for the space of half an hour, when one of them turned away and entered his cottage near to which they had been standing, and the other walked away and shortly disappeared over one of the sand-hills. Two hours

later the same men emerged from a belt of scrub which skirted Mooganna on the south-east. They walked about for some time on the little patch of open ground, occasionally pausing to make observations, and then looking around. The moon had entered her second quarter, and rendered everything clearly visible. At length they entered the scrub at the same point from which they had emerged, but quickly returned, one carrying a heavy bag, the other a gun. The gun was several times loaded from the contents of the bag, and then discharged into the ground. There were numberless holes made by the ants in all directions, and into some of these the men carefully dropped part of what was in the bag; the remainder was scattered on the surface, the bag was rolled up, the gun shouldered, and the two miners disappeared among the trees.

Several weeks passed away, and about a fortnight had elapsed since Mr. Percy's arrival on the peninsula, when the landlord of the "Wheatsheaf" suddenly presented himself, and announced a new and important discovery. In those days everything was believed; no one doubted anything; the sun was above them, and inexhaustible lodes of surpassing richness were traversing the earth beneath their feet in every direction. They were as sure of one as of the other; no one set any bounds to anything; no one ventured to dispute the fact that Mooganna would become a vast emporium of wealth and influence, a city of colossal size. Every fresh rumour added to the severe pressure which was brought to bear on unfortunate builders; for no sooner was another new discovery reported than it became evident that an additional hotel and several more stores must be built immediately. It was of no consequence whether the

report was true or not, because, if copper had not been found in the place specified, it would be found somewhere else.

Mr. Percy listened attentively while the landlord gave him some particulars of the discovery of surface copper by two miners. They had been prospecting, or looking for pheasants' eggs, or trying to catch lizards, or something else, in the scrub, near Mooganna, and found a considerable quantity of small pieces of green carbonate. They made the discovery known to some persons in Adelaide, who joined them in securing eight sections. Mr. Percy was just then too much interested in Bunkumgorum to think seriously of anything else, and he had forgotten the landlord's tale, until advertisements and comments in the newspapers drew his attention to the "Wheal Stuart Mining Venture." The great South Australian explorer, Stuart, had not long since returned from his long, hazardous expedition to the northern coast, and he was honoured by the promoters of the new mining venture calling it after his name. Shares were sold, and a few hundred pounds expended, when a dispute arose. The Adelaide speculators began to surmise that there was something wrong. Finally, they arrived at the conclusion that the surface-copper was what, among miners, is called a plant, which, translated into modern English, means that it was not deposited in the place where it was found in the usual way, or by the working of any known law in the kingdom of nature; and they had the hardihood to state that the copper was planted, notwithstanding the fact that the precious metal had been found below the surface as well as on it. They would not listen to the opinion of the two miners, who, as practical working men, must know much better than

Adelaide sharebrokers and others engaged in business could ; and they forfeited the sections, thus giving up the chance of receiving for the future £10,000 a year each in the form of dividends.

The two discoverers, however, would not allow themselves to be deprived of all they hoped to gain, and though they could not retain possession of eight sections of land, they secured the one on which the surface copper had been discovered, and where the working had been carried on. There, with praiseworthy perseverance, they continued to work for many months, to the great astonishment of all the inhabitants of Mooganna ; for a malicious report had been circulated, and was believed by some credulous persons, that the ore found beneath the surface had been deposited there from the barrel of a gun.

Jack Penarvis and William Trenary treated all these scandalous reports with the contempt they deserved, and steadily pursued the course they had marked out for themselves ; but so little was thought of the Victoria mine, as it was now named by the proprietors, that no one ever visited the locality, consequently, the two men continued their search after copper, undisturbed by the prying curiosity of the public.

Mr. Percy had been several weeks at Mooganna, when the residents of the entire district were startled by a report that a deposit of rich black ore had at length been found at the Victoria. Great excitement prevailed ; the locality was visited by all the mining celebrities, who came away perfectly satisfied that a second Mooganna mine had been discovered, and the two hard-working, industrious miners had no difficulty in disposing of the greatest part of their interest at fabulous prices. They suddenly became

great men, and forthwith commenced drinking champagne for breakfast instead of weak tea.

Mr. Percy's funds were at a very low ebb, but as each hour in the day brought with it additional confirmation of the genuineness of the discovery, and of the richness of the ore, he began to think that he might as well try to secure one or two shares at any rate ; but he would just go and look at the place first. He sallied forth accordingly, and had not gone far before he met with a mining agent connected with the "big mine," as that of Mooganna was generally called, in contradistinction to the smaller ones by which it was surrounded.

"Good evening, Trelease. I am just off to look at the Victoria. Have you seen it?"

"Yes ; I was there this morning. It is a first-rate thing. I was thinking of running down again, and will walk with you, if you have no objection."

When they reached the Victoria they found a number of mining captains, storekeepers, and others, assembled in groups ; all were eager and excited. Mr. Percy quietly asked the opinion of two or three whom he slightly knew, and on receiving the same favourable report from each of those who had been under ground, he decided that he would have some shares, if he could get them at any reasonable price.

Though not a physiognomist in such sense as Lavater was, Arthur Percy was a shrewd observer of men and manners in a general way. Intuitively he recognised the gentleman by birth and education, under the roughest garb, and the parvenu in his suit of broadcloth.

When the parvenu, the "Sans Culottes," leaves his native shore to live in Australia, unless he is fortunate enough to possess at least an average amount

of common sense,—and that is not a very large item among a certain class,—he is very likely to become a notable illustration, among men, of those insect transformations which naturalists delight in observing in the lower orders of the animal kingdom, but which a man true to himself, and, as far as a fallen nature permits him to be, true to the God in Whose image he was created, grieves to see among the higher class, where reason takes the place of instinct. Not that he grieves to see any man rise from a lower to a higher level, but he does grieve to see all that constitutes man's real self crawling about in that profound abyss of ignorance where he thinks he knows everything, and surrounded by an atmosphere of self-conceit, so dense as to prevent his seeing anything better than himself. That animal may plume his gilded wings ; he may describe circles in an official orbit, and think he shines by his own light, but any light that surrounds him is but reflected upon him by the influence which drew him within a limited sphere, and he never really rises in the scale of reasoning intelligence. He may leave the nest where he was hatched, and scorn the old birds who fed him, but he remains upon the same level, and his superiority ends where it began,—in his own imagination. The climate of Australia seems to be peculiarly favourable to the existence of animals of this genus. They swarm in that sunny land as mosquitoes do at the close of a hot summer day ; and, like mosquitoes, they have the power and the will to sting those who may, by adverse circumstances, be placed within their reach for a little while ; those who, happily for themselves, have at least light enough to see and feel their own deficiencies and short-comings,—to understand how little the wisest really know, and that that little

is acquired by the use of talents bestowed by One Who is alike the Author and Finisher of all that is good in man. That specimens of this genus were known to the ancients, we learn from the history of an aspiring frog ; and it is not a little singular that, in the present day as in the remote past, where the same peculiar idiosyncrasies occur, the same effects are, under similar circumstances, produced, as brought that celebrated frog to an untimely end, and caused him to become a warning to all future ages.

As Mr. Percy stood among the groups whom curiosity or interest had drawn together, he amused himself by noticing the different traits of character which were displayed unmistakably in words, looks, and actions.

Mr. Burton was there, the educated, polished gentleman, tarnished, however, as Mr. Percy had begun to discover, by the mists which rise whenever self-interest and the world's standard of honour are suffered to cast their shadow over the conscience.

Captain Treloar was there, anxious to secure as many shares as he could in the new discovery, but cautiously insinuating that the ore was not as rich as had been stated. He had been under ground, and had detected indications of a change in the country ; it was impossible to say how it would turn out. A very clever man Treloar was, in his own way. He succeeded in getting several shares, on what he considered safe terms, and sold them at a premium the next day. Why he sold his interest in such a valuable mine was not quite clear to everyone who knew of the transaction ; but no one could prove that he knew more than others did, therefore, the only comment subsequently made was, that "he was a fortunate fellow."

The very opposite of Treloar was another mining captain, who seemed to have the same smile for everyone, when he did smile, but generally he looked grave. Every line of his face indicated extreme caution ; every movement was measured, every word weighed before it was uttered. Captain Hardy was never known to give any voluntary information on any subject, or to express a definite opinion. He was by no means deficient in knowledge, that was obvious ; but all his sentences would bear two constructions, and his conversational powers were restricted to turning aside direct questions by asking others, and enunciating vague generalities. He had been standing by Mr. Percy for some time, occasionally addressing him, and once or twice he smiled, as Percy exclaimed, "What a cunning-looking rascal that is ! he would cheat anyone,—rob his own father if he had an opportunity ;" or, as a tall, pale man, with a handsome black beard, suddenly made his appearance, "That fellow thinks himself all creation, as the Yankees say." But the smile was cold, came by rule, might mean anything, and it had the same effect upon Arthur Percy,—whose own smile always provoked an answering one,—as a wet blanket has upon fire, and at length he turned away and walked to a little distance.

"You don't like Captain Hardy," said Trelease, who had been watching Percy's expressive face.

"I don't understand him, that is all."

"You would like him if you knew more of him."

"Very likely ; but I never admired too much caution."

"Ah ! he is cautious, that's certain," said Trelease ; "but he is a kind-hearted man and a just man. His post is no easy one ; he has to please the

miners and the miners' masters, and he need be cautious."

The man with the beard appeared to be everywhere at the same moment. He rushed about without any apparent object, giving a patronizing nod to one, an encouraging smile to another. He appeared to be using the strongest language ; everything was "wonderful," "extraordinary," "tremendous," or "frightful !" It was evident, however, that he did not apply the last epithet to himself ; he thought he was just the reverse, and he was quite right. His figure was good, so were his features, but the expression of his face spoilt all ; self-complacency, insincerity, weakness, almost amounting, when he smiled, to imbecility, were strongly marked, and as he raised his hat, and drew his handkerchief across his face, Mr. Percy thought that the receding forehead accounted for all. He had once, in a careless way, examined a phrenological bust, and he then arrived at the conclusion, that where there was no room for brains there could be none. He did not pursue the study, nor did he forget just as much of it as he then mastered, so that when he saw a human being perfectly satisfied with himself, and behaving more like his prototype of the woods than a man, he always looked at his head.

"Who and what is that fellow ?" he enquired of Captain Trelease, who came up as the man with the beard stroked that appendage for about the twentieth time since making his appearance.

"What fellow ?"

"The one a little to the right who is smirking and bowing to some one. There ! he is now rubbing his hands in the most approved style, using imaginary soap and water. He must have been behind a counter half his life to do it in that style."

"That is one of the officers of the 'big mine.'"

"The right man in the right place. I like to see things match," said Mr. Percy, in a tone of keen satire.

"Mr. Shallow doesn't think himself nobody," was the rejoinder.

"Certainly not. By no means. There he is again, stroking his beard with his fore paw."

"Ah! his hand isn't as handsome as his beard," said Trelease, in the tone in which a man speaks when some new discovery is dawning upon him.

"It accords precisely with his manners," replied Percy, who continued to look at the antics of one whom he thought would be invaluable to Darwin, as an illustration of his theory of progressive development. "That man is a fine type of a class who recognise nothing beyond themselves. They have no fathers or grandfathers. Shallow! did you say was his name?"

"Yes; Mr. Frederick Shallow."

"He is evidently one of the same family that Shakespeare was acquainted with," said Mr. Percy. "I would not mind staking all I am worth that that man thinks he knows everything, and really knows nothing."

"That is beginning to be the general opinion," replied Captain Trelease. "It is certain that a friend of mine had to teach him the duties of his office when he came here; and he was very civil and polite till he thought he knew all that was necessary."

"When he immediately cut his instructor," said Percy. "Just what I should expect him to do. I wonder how long it will take him to get his moustache in order. He has been arranging it for the last five minutes."

"No, he did not cut him ; that would have been inconvenient."

"Then he became a great man, 'Lorenzo, the Magnificent.' I know the genus ; I have met with more than one variety since I have been in Australia."

"The worst is, that you cannot trust him. He seems to be very free and pleasant as long as it suits him, or as long as a person pleases him ; but if any one offends him he will do him all the injury he can ; not openly, but in an underhand way. He is a great coward."

"Most persons are, who are not open and straightforward in word and deed."

"I will tell you what I happened to see and overhear a few days ago. I have said nothing about it to any one connected with the mine ; we have all to work together, and it is best to keep quiet ; but as you don't belong to us, and I know you won't talk about it, I will just give you one specimen of what Mr. Shallow can do. I believe he knows we are talking about him."

"Yes ; he has a suspicion that I am studying him or admiring him, and instead of looking at me like a man and returning the compliment, he has become fidgety, and is furtively glancing at me from the corners of his eyes. When I see a man doing that I always feel inclined to knock him down."

Trelease laughed.

"It is a fact. I would not trust him in any way. I should not think for a moment of transacting business with a man who could not look me full in the face, unless in the presence of one or two witnesses. If that could not be, I would have all that was necessary in writing. I should be sure to find

myself in the wrong box, if I did not take those precautions, and I should deserve to be. Ah ! there is another stealthy glance ; he is hardly worth looking at ; let us move on, Trelease. Confound the fellow's self-complacency ; he has drawn himself up and is looking delighted, almost as if he were going to make a bow to me. He does think I have been admiring him."

"I daresay he does. To make use of his favourite expression, 'he is easy in his mind' on that point. You remember that awkward journey we travelled together two years ago, Mr. Percy ?"

"Yes ; it is not a thing to be forgotten ; nor the good turn you did me on that occasion."

"Oh, that was nothing ; you would have done the same by me."

"I hope so ; but what has that journey to do with the man we were speaking of ?"

"Nothing ; but it was just before that I first knew Mr. Shallow. He was not such a 'great man as he is now, and did not think so much of himself and so little of others."

"Every proposition in that sentence, Trelease, is wrong. That man's name is singularly felicitous, it describes him exactly, consequently he is not, and never can be a great man, except in his own imagination. There ! he always was and always will be a diamond of the first water ; but he would be servile or tyrannical according to circumstances."

"You are right there ; that is just what he is. He contrives to humbug a few persons whom he chooses to visit, and they seem to like him, but nobody else does. However he thinks they do."

"Of course ; people of that sort attribute their own feelings to others, and if you want to make an



enemy of a man of that kind, all you have to do is to ruffle his self-complacency by holding up a mirror in which he can see himself for a moment as those who know him see him. He would never forgive that."

"I should not like to have Mr. Shallow for my enemy as long as I have to work in the same concern. I was going to tell you of what happened a few days ago. Mr. Wollaston, a gentleman who is quiet and civil to every one, and who, if he makes any difference at all, is more attentive to a poor man than a rich one, went to Mr. Shallow's office to receive some money. I happened to know that Mr. Shallow had forgotten to take the key of the safe with him, because he had to tell his clerk to fetch it, and that was after Mr. Wollaston had called. The clerk had told him the day before that the account was made up and the money ready, and Mr. Wollaston signed the book. Then the clerk found that Mr. Shallow had not brought the key with him, so he asked Mr. Wollaston to call again, which he did, before the clerk, who was sent off to Mr. Shallow's house, had time to get the key. Mr. Shallow was standing at the door of his office when Mr. Wollaston came up the second time, and called out in a very rude manner, 'You can't have your money to-day.' 'Why not?' said Mr. Wollaston. 'It is not ready; the account is not made up.' 'But I know it is, because I have signed the receipt.' He was caught for once, but instead of being ashamed, he got in a rage, and shouted, 'Well, you can't have it, and you shan't have it.' Mr. Wollaston did not speak, but passed Shallow and went into the head office, and lodged a formal complaint against him for incivility and improper conduct in his official capacity."

"The best thing he could do. A gentleman could not condescend to bandy words with a man who would tell a direct lie rather than acknowledge that he was capable of making a mistake ; which, of course, forgetting to take his office keys with him was. How did it end ?"

"Well, you see, Shallow is very like the ostrich. When she hides her head in the sand she fancies no one can see her ; and he thinks no one can see farther than himself, and he had no notion that any one else knew what was going on. He can look very malicious as well as sly, and he did, as he stood in the passage after Mr. Wollaston had gone in and shut the door after him. Whether he heard what was said, or only guessed what Mr. Wollaston was going to do, I can't tell; but as soon as Mr. Wollaston had passed him as he left the office, he said, 'If you want to know why you can't have the money, it is because I haven't got the key.' That is the way he behaves to those he doesn't like. He told the truth at last, and that gave him the power to say afterwards that he explained to Mr. Wollaston exactly how it was, and by a few other additions he made it appear that Mr. Wollaston had made a mistake ; but it was a malicious insult, and those who had an opportunity of judging for themselves regarded it in that light. He is a kind of eel. He wriggles into scrapes and he wriggles out of them, but he will be caught some day."

"I suppose Mr. Wollaston had offended the fellow."

"I don't believe he ever did anything to offend him. He is not the sort of man to offend people. I know, and so do a good many others, that Mr. Shallow is under a very deep obligation to Mr.



Wollaston, but instead of being grateful he tried hard to injure him on that very point, and partly to shield the feelings of another, and partly because he felt himself beyond the reach of such men as Shallow, Mr. Wollaston took no notice of his abominable conduct."

"Oh! that explains all. A man who can receive and bear an injury in that way is capable of forgiving it and living down slander; but the one who wilfully commits the wrong can do neither; or rather, the bad feeling that prompts him to try to injure another makes and keeps him a bitter enemy. To change the subject, what do you think, Trelease, about buying shares in this mine? I am rather hard up for cash, and I am in so many things of this kind."

"I would not give what they are asking for shares now. I believe it is a good thing but I would rather wait till the excitement is over. I know several who have given more than they can afford for some shares, and they must sell them again soon."

"I think I will follow your advice, Trelease."





CHAPTER XVI.



HE next morning Mr. Percy went to see how his banking account stood, and he found that with the exception of a few hundred pounds, all he had to shew for the rest of his property was mining scrip; for holding which he had the satisfaction of paying calls instead of receiving dividends as he had expected to do. "I will buy no more shares," was his mental resolve.

As he was leaving the bank he encountered Mr. Shallow, who smiled, rubbed his hands, bowed, and finally presented his hand to Mr. Percy, saying as he did so,—

"Happy to make your acquaintance."

"You have the advantage of me, sir," replied Mr. Percy, stiffly.

"My name is Shallow. I am one of the officers of the Mooganna mine. I shall have great pleasure in shewing you over the mine, and introducing you to the captain."

Mr. Percy looked at him, and slightly inclined his head.

"I only heard last night that you were staying here, and were acquainted with one of the directors. This is rather a dull place for strangers, unless they have some agreeable acquaintances."

"Ah!" thought Percy, "I was right. He fancied I was admiring him yesterday, which led him to



the conclusion that I must be a person of superior judgment and discernment, and worth enquiring after. Then he learns that one of the directors of the mine is a friend of his admirer, who becomes at once a desirable acquaintance."

As these thoughts crossed his mind he smiled. Mr. Shallow thought it was a smile of pleasure and gratification at being noticed by so great a man as himself, and went on,—

"You have not been at Mooganna long; wonderful place! increasing in importance every day."

"Nothing very inviting about the place, I think. Good morning, Mr. Shallow."

"Very cool, very extraordinary," soliloquized Mr. Shallow, "after my taking the trouble to notice him. Perhaps he does not like my not having called upon him; I have no doubt that is it."

Satisfied with that reflection, Mr. Shallow entered the bank; and Mr. Percy, as he walked along, found himself pondering over the manners and customs of South Australians, and wondering to what class of Englishmen they could belong. In England he had never met with anything like them. He knew the hearty, honest, independent yeoman, and respected him. The peasantry, the respectable tradesman and merchant, the intellectual professional man, the country gentleman, England's sailors and soldiers, he had met with all; but the great men of Australia puzzled him. Mushrooms he knew they were, but he could not make out whence they sprang. He began to think that there must be some peculiar stratum in the tertiary formation, with which he was unacquainted, and which was favourable to the development of a nondescript race of a very objectionable character. They knew

nothing, and what was worse, they were not aware of the lamentable fact; on the contrary, they seemed to think that all the wisdom of Solon and of Socrates was concentrated in their own heads. Not that they ever heard of the Spartan lawgiver, or of the good old Greek philosopher; if their names were inadvertently mentioned by one who had studied the history of more intellectual people than those who inhabit Australia, they would probably jump at the conclusion that one was a celebrated Methodist preacher, and the other a great stump orator of the present day. The contents of the "Dead Letter Office" are as well known to the legislators and other great men of Australia as the history of the past is. Then they wage war against all authorities, and set aside all rules hitherto laid down for correct speaking and writing; they drop *h*'s and aspirate vowels; they glory in American slang and Yankee customs; and many of them, Mr. Shallow among them, illustrate the truth of Captain Marryatt's remark, when describing a schoolmaster,—“He wrote a most abominably good hand, that usual sign of a poor and trifle-occupied mind.”

Mr. Percy felt, as he thought over all these unfortunate peculiarities, that he could set them all aside, as things which did not concern him in any way; they were disagreeable so long as he had to encounter them, but personally they did not affect him in the least. One thing there was, however, which did. There is an old saying in the old country, “An Englishman's home is his castle.” Mr. Percy believed that, and also that an Englishman's hand is his own; but he found on landing in Australia, that unless he scrupulously kept his

hands in his pockets they were not his own, and were liable to be seized as common property by everyone he casually addressed. Mr. Percy's dislike to undue familiarity was extreme. He was high-minded and warm-hearted, and consequently, was naturally affable and courteous to all, but he was slightly fastidious on some points, in the matter of shaking hands for one, and he had set his face as a flint against the practice as carried on indiscriminately in Australia; so that when Mr. Shallow, without an introduction of any kind, attempted to take his hand, he mentally resented it as an affront.

As he strolled on, his early home and all that then surrounded him, rose before the mind's eye, in strange contrast to the present scene, and he began to wonder why he came to Australia at all; he might just as well have gone somewhere else. He did not positively dislike life in the bush; it had the charm of novelty for him; he had shewn kindness to the natives whenever they visited his station, went out hunting with them, and had received from them many little proofs of their good will. Sometimes it was an emu's egg, or the tail of a large kangaroo; or a lubra would take him some skins of the opossum and dingo. In addition to that he had made a few thousand pounds. His sheep run was not an extensive one, but a succession of favourable seasons had caused it to be a profitable one. Now all appeared to be changing, for the worse; his mining speculations had not turned out as he had been led to expect they would; he was gradually becoming more dissatisfied with himself, his quarters, and his occupation; and the reports he received from Koonappa were

as discouraging as they could be. The last week in February had nearly closed, and no rain had fallen since the end of August in the previous year. Water was not to be had; cattle were dying, and the shepherds in many parts of the colony were compelled to leave the flocks of sheep to their fate, in order to save their own lives.

The result of Mr. Percy's reflections was a fit of "the blues," from which he thought he would try to rouse himself by taking a walk to the beach and having a bathe by moonlight. It had been an intensely hot day, and as he walked slowly along the ridge of one of the numerous sand-hills which run in a westerly direction across the Peninsula towards the sea, he stopped for a moment to speak to a man who was standing near the door of a small cottage.

"Just come from the Victoria, sir; a fine thing that is."

"Have you any interest in it?" enquired Mr. Percy.

"No! I wish I had. My mate has brought away some of the ore. Will you step inside and have a look at it?"

As they entered the cottage Thomas Pengelly was examining some ore which was in a paper on the table before him.

"Here is a gen'leman wants to look at that ore, Pengelly."

"Ah! it's worth looking at. As fine stuff, that, as any as comes from the Mooganna; yet here's my missis making objections to buying two shares."

"Because, Thomas—will you please to sit down, sir," dusting a chair with her apron, "because,



Thomas, you've worked hard for what you've saved, and you'd best keep it."

"That's true, but I'd like to double it, and I don't see why I shouldn't. Everybody's buying as can. I picked up that myself; there it is, and no mistake about it."

"Well! you know your own business best, and I reckon you'll do as you like."

The old woman sat down, drew out her spectacles, and slowly put them on. Then drew the paper of ore towards her and began to examine it. She had not looked at it before.

"You don't find such as that every day," said Pengelly."

"It might be very good ore, Thomas, but I never knowed that sewing cotton growed ready made in copper;" and as she spoke, she drew out a small thread.

"Oh! What's that? let me see," exclaimed both miners at once.

"Clear enough what it is. How did it get there, Thomas?"

"I got that ore out of the hole myself, and put it in that bit of paper, and it's never been out of my hands, till I placed it on that table;" and Pengelly brought his clenched hand down with such force, that his missis, as he called her, started back. It's a plant, as sure as my name is Thomas Pengelly."

"If you are sure of that, said Mr. Percy, the best thing you can do is to expose the fraud at once, to prevent others being victimized."

"The rascals! I'll stop their selling any more shares."

The bubble had burst, and the indignant victims

had no satisfaction but to try to discover how Penarvis and Trenary had contrived to deceive persons experienced in mining operations. The fraud had been cleverly managed by sinking several fathoms, and then driving a level for some distance ; sinking again and filling the excavation with ore raised from the Mooganna mine. The level was then filled in and a deeper one driven, so as to cut the ore which had been buried.

Arthur Percy rose the next morning a wiser man. The discovery of the preceding evening had opened his eyes, and he was fully resolved to sell every share he held as soon as he could realize what he gave for them, and to leave the Peninsula as soon as he had done so.





CHAPTER XVII.



FEW days after the occurrence related in the last chapter, as Percy was taking his breakfast, occasionally looking at a small local journal that was lying on the table, his eye rested upon an advertisement, which completely changed the current of his thoughts. An entertainment, described as an "Elocutionary treat" was to take place that evening in the Primitive Methodist Chapel. It was to consist of "a dramatic representation of the history of Joseph and his brethren, produced and sustained by twenty-five characters."

Percy had never been inside a dissenting chapel. He had heard of such places in England just as everyone else has; but dissenters in the old country are a distinct class. They have the privilege, in that land of freedom, of doing as they like, and they avail themselves of it; but they keep themselves, or, more correctly speaking, they are left to themselves. No one else knows anything about them, except politically, by means of newspaper reports. As far as Percy knew, he had never spoken to a dissenter until he landed in Australia. There he found schism in the ascendant, the protestant element widely diffused, very pretentious, very aspiring. He could not walk out in Adelaide, on Sunday, without being in danger of

being run over by some man in black clothes and a white choker, on his way to a conventicle of some kind, where he was going to teach others what he did not know himself. When he came to Grant's Peninsula it was the same, and as opportunity offered, he sometimes amused himself by enquiring who the gentlemen in black were. One was a miner, another a shoemaker, a third a general storekeeper, a fourth the town-crier, and he was positively assured by an eye-witness that on one occasion, when the town-crier preached, "there was not a dry eye in the chapel." Percy hoped that each had a good supply of handkerchiefs, which was considered a very improper and profane remark. Poor Arthur ! He was certainly out of his element in Australia. Besides being thoroughly English in everything, he was, though he made little profession or outward shew of his belief, an intelligent member of the Church. He was her son by baptism, and when in repeating her Creed he used the words, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church," he did so with the firm conviction that none who forsake her to walk in ways of their own choosing do so without periling their salvation.

He had an intuitive dislike to entering a conventicle. Under ordinary circumstances, he would just as soon have thought of picking a man's pocket ; but after giving the matter due consideration, he determined to go and see for himself to what lengths these professing bibliolators would travesty the sacred volume.

Evening came, and he went. On entering the chapel he saw a formidable array of speakers, arranged upon a narrow platform running from one side of the building to the other. The centre of

the platform was occupied by numerous singers and musicians. A man, calling himself the Rev. Jeremiah Jobson, occupied the position of chairman. After a few introductory remarks, he said that "the story which was about to be represented showed the providence of God as developed in the history of a family which had been immortalized. He asked the indulgence of the audience for any elocutionary defect that might be observable. The speakers were for the most part 'Cousin Jacks,' but, nevertheless, they would do their best. He trusted the entertainment would be both interesting and instructive, and that they should spend a profitable evening."

The drama, which, to use the words of one of the audience, was in "heroic couplets," then commenced. Percy was at first amused at the absurd burlesque. There was no attempt (it was modestly stated) at "scenic display," the only one appearing in a supposed characteristic garb was a young man who represented Joseph, and he stood out in bold relief in a coat of many colours—red, white and blue. Percy felt that his gravity was forsaking him, and that he was getting into a very explosive state of mind, as he critically examined that coat, and contrasted the long, loose, flowing garments of the east with the modern-cut coat of a provincial tailor in Australia. However, everyone else thought it was the correct thing. The proceedings were varied and enlivened by the performances, at stated intervals, of the choir, and Percy kept his seat, though not without the exercise of a little self-restraint, for he was gradually becoming very much disgusted with the whole thing, until the young man in the short, coloured jacket, was quietly conducted to the

top of an inclined plane, and there left to slide gradually down from the platform to the floor of the chapel. What became of him afterwards Percy never knew. It was too much. Disgusted and indignant he flung himself out of the chapel, provoked with himself for having entered it; for he knew that never again could he read the beautiful and touching history recorded in the sacred pages of the Bible, especially that part of it where the young unoffending brother is let down into the pit, there to die, if God had not rescued him, without thinking of the irréverent scene, the wretched buffoonery he had just witnessed. It was his first and last visit to a dissenting meeting-house.

Mr. Percy often found time drag heavily along at Mooganna, and each day he became more impatient at being detained there. Every month that passed, during the long drought that so seriously affected the welfare of the colony, brought distressing accounts from the sheep-farming districts; especially from those in the north, and he was anxious to go and see for himself how matters stood at his own station. Not that he could do any good; that he knew. An abundant fall of rain was the only hope of the farmer, and that seemed as if it would never come. Clouds rose, sometimes a dense belt, dark and heavy, stretched round the horizon towards evening; but in the morning no trace of them remained. Nothing above but a clear blue sky and the blazing sun; nothing below but the parched ground, so hot and dry that it was almost painful to walk upon it. The least wind raised clouds of dust; and bush fires swept over the country in all directions, leaving nothing behind them but the scorched and

blackened stumps of trees. Immense tracts of land were laid bare; no green thing remained. The roots of the trees alone remained alive, to send forth, when the right time came, young buds, which in the course of a few years would grow into strong, bushy trees, and make an almost impenetrable forest.

Water had become so scarce on Grant's Peninsula that small quantities in buckets were asked for as a favour, at any price, and refused. The miners were supplied with distilled water at a fixed price, the allowance per day being strictly limited by the mine authorities; but even under those regulations the supply was sometimes inadequate to the demand, and the greatest consternation prevailed when a report was spread that some accident had occurred, and the distilling apparatus was out of order. It was too true. Men worked night and day, but the already small supply of water had to be reduced.

Percy thought that he would go, and leave his mining speculations to take their chance, when on enquiring one evening towards the end of April why there was no bread on the tea-table, he was told that the baker could get no water to make any. They had sent to know why none had been left at the house as usual, and the messenger found the baker's wife crying. She had not been able to purchase even enough water to make a cup of tea that day, and she and her children had had nothing to drink but a little ginger-beer they happened to have in the house.

About that time extensive bush fires had been burning in various directions for several weeks, the wind as it veered round bringing the smoke over

Mooganna, and occasionally rendering the air close and stifling. So many fires commencing in different places at the same time, and continuing to rage furiously for such a lengthened period, could be accounted for only by the heat and the extreme dryness of everything, occasioned by the long drought. They continued to spread, until at last they extended, with here and there a break in the chain of fire, from south-west to north. The air became so oppressive that Arthur tried closing doors and windows and staying in the house. That would not do for long. He walked out and wandered listlessly about, the remains of the light burnt foliage of the trees falling round him like snow flakes. He thought of the April showers in his native land, and felt more dissatisfied than ever with his present quarters, but most of all with himself for having brought his affairs into such a state as to render it necessary for him to stay on the Peninsula. If, when something occurred more disagreeable than usual, he thought of going, a little reflection shewed him that he could not without giving up his best chance of recovering what he had sunk in mining shares ; and on the evening when he contrasted the shower of burnt leaves and the dense atmosphere, with the rain-drops, the freshness, the brightness, and above all, the rainbow of April in England, he suddenly came to the conclusion that the only possible chance of being able to breathe freely during the night would be to wrap himself in a blanket and lie down on the sand close to the water's edge. He was about starting to the beach when the wind veered round, a cool refreshing breeze cleared the air, and Percy's spirits were restored to their usual balance.

Towards the end of May rain came, and the earth was glad. It seemed as if everything had been waiting to spring into new life. The dews of heaven were to the parched earth what the voice of the Saviour was to the dead. All that had been lying dormant came forth. Nature had been sleeping, not dead, during that long, long summer; and when the earth was green again, and the bright, clear, refreshing days of an Australian winter came, Percy, with many another, enjoyed the present and ceased to remember the past. He had hope, too, to cheer him. True, that star was rather too much like an *ignis fatuus* to be quite satisfactory. She shone one day and disappeared the next; and so time went on, and the spring of another year found Arthur Percy still a resident of Grant's Peninsula. Dividends seemed further off than ever, and yet "indications" were so good, and everything so "promising" that he still held all his shares in different mining companies and ventures, some of which, however, had collapsed, either because there was no copper, or no funds to continue the search for it. He did not allow these small losses to discourage him entirely, because he expected to dispose ultimately of his interest in other mines so as to make up for these minor affairs.

Another unusually long and dry summer had again depressed the farming interest, and at this juncture the price of copper began to decline, partly in consequence of the vast supplies poured into England from the Chilian mines. Then came the great monetary panic, from which England, strong in the might of ages of progressive wisdom, wealth, and vigour, recovered. It was a passing storm, beneath whose violence the stately tree

bowed for a moment and rose again like a phoenix from the ashes ; but her young daughter of the south, destitute of all the resources which constitute the strength of the mother-country, was laid prostrate.

In a few months Percy found that all his mining scrip was valueless,—waste paper. He felt very much inclined to burn it, but on further consideration he placed it in his valise, heartily wishing, as he did so, that he had never seen it, or Grant's Peninsula. And yet, as he stood on the deck of the steamer that was fast bearing him away from its shores, and felt that he was looking on them for the last time, all bitterness faded away. He had complained of many things ; he had blamed many men ; but as he stood there, with his arms folded, his eyes fixed on the receding coast, he blamed himself.

Arthur Percy was an aristocrat in the true sense of the word.





CHAPTER XVIII.



“OUR years to-day since we first saw Kooroona,” said Mrs. Vernon, at the close of one of those oppressive days in January, which make English people long to feel again the cool breezes of their native land.

“And to-morrow I shall be nineteen, mamma.”

“Yes; you are getting quite old, Isa,” exclaimed Edith, who, followed by a tame kangaroo, bounded on to the verandah just in time to hear

Isabelle’s remark.

“Not quite that, Edie; I hope I shall not grow old in Australia.”

“I hope not, dear,” said Mrs. Vernon, “I should be sorry to think that we should always live here; and yet it seems almost ungrateful to say so. We have been very fortunate, and this is a pleasant home.”

“*Was* a pleasant one, mamma,” said Edith. “It is miserable now to see everything burnt up, and to know that the poor sheep are dying around us.”

“I wish we could go to England,” said Isabelle. “I don’t know what makes me think so much about it this evening; but the feeling amounts to an irresistible longing.”

“I have often felt so, Isabelle,” replied Mrs. Vernon; “especially when the weather is unusually

hot and depressing, as it has been to-day. That has something to do with it ; and now it is very sad to think of all the suffering occasioned by these two long dry seasons. However, thinking about it does no good. I have almost decided upon plan which I first thought of when you were ill, and which I intended to mention to-morrow morning."

"Because it is Isabelle's birthday, mamma?"

"Yes."

"Does Harry know about it?"

"No."

"I wonder what it can be," and Edith looked enquiringly at her sister.

"Can't help you a bit, Edie. I have no idea, except that it is something pleasant. Mamma's face tells me that she thinks we shall all like it."

"Oh! here is Harry. I will go to meet him, and see if he can guess what it is."

Harry Vernon would scarcely have been recognised by a stranger, as the tall, slight youth, who four years previously, had commenced bush life at Kooroona. He was now more than six feet in height, and proportionately broad. His full chest and strong arms gave evidence of a life of unusual activity. He had, in fact, lived out of doors, and his handsome bronzed face and hands formed a strong contrast to Edith's, as she walked back with him towards the house. She was so strikingly like him in features, character, and manners, that Mrs. Vernon sometimes called her his miniature.

"Harry can't guess, mamma; but he says he knows what he should like to do."

"What is that?"

"He will not tell me. Ask him, Isa."

Isabelle looked up, and Harry, as he turned smilingly towards her, said,

"This little piece of energetic curiosity always provokes me to say no, when she asks a question." Then, changing his tone, as his eye rested on Isabelle's white face, he added "another headache, Isabelle?"

"Not much. It is only the heat, Harry."

"She is longing to go to England," said Edith."

"So will you be, when you are older."

"I am seventeen. I am old enough to know what I like."

"See the dignity of seventeen years standing," exclaimed Harry, laughing. "I say, Edith! what is the matter?" and he seized her hand as she was turning away, and drawing her down towards him, as he sat upon the verandah steps, he made her take a seat beside him. "Don't be a little goose," he said, pinching her hand.

"You always laugh at me, Harry; and you never do at Isabelle."

"Does our pet want to be a woman at once?" asked Harry mischievously, trying, as he did so, to catch sight of her face as she turned from him.

Suddenly she looked round and fixed her large dark eyes upon him; then snatching her hand from his grasp, she darted into the house.

Harry used to say afterwards that he never could think of Edith as a child, after meeting her eyes at that moment. No one spoke for a little while. Harry was sobered, and Mrs. Vernon looked very grave.

"What is it all about—what is the matter?" Harry said at length.

"Not much," replied Mrs. Vernon; "only you must not tease Edith."

"I did not mean to tease her—at least I did not think that she would take it in that way. She looked older than you, Isabelle, when she turned round upon me."

"Edith has very strong feelings," said Mrs. Vernon, "but she puzzles me sometimes. She is good and obedient, though she is so high-spirited. I have felt occasionally that if she had less right feeling, or if I had given way to her when she was a child, she would now be uncontrollable."

"She is very fond of you, Harry," said Isabelle ; "and thinks a great deal about your opinion. Could you not remember to speak to her always as you do to me ?"

"What ! to little Edith ?"

"She is as tall as I am."

"Yes ; but fancy my talking to her as I do to you. She would not understand me."

"Indeed, Harry, you are mistaken. You do not quite understand her."

"So it appears."

"She is a child," pursued Isabelle, "when she is playing with her pet animals, or with the little black children ; but, when I was ill, she appeared to me to be more a woman than I am. I seemed to be the child then. Did you not read what I mean in her eyes when she looked at you just now ?"

"So the spell is broken !" said Harry. "There is no longer a child in the house."

He looked serious for a moment. It was perhaps the feeling, although unknown to himself, that all, except those who know no stronger sentiment than degrees of cool indifference in sorrow and in joy, have, on seeing a thing for the last time, that made him look so. If we could only know which is the

last time ; that we are taking the last look ; saying the last good-bye ; touching the hand or the cheek for the last time, how differently we should feel and speak, and act ! But it is hid in mercy—we could not bear it. We know all that it is good for us to know on this side the grave. In the land where there will be no partings, no last words, we shall know as we are known.

There are some high-toned natures which require long discipline before they can lay hold of and retain their crowning grace,—humility. That great gift, which adorns some characters through life, comes only to others in answer to prayer, and in a path where chastisement is recognized in those afflictions which spring from seeds sown by love and mercy.

Mrs. Vernon was fully aware of the nobleness of Edith's character, undeveloped as it yet was. She felt a mother's pride in her high principles, the absence of all selfishness, her warm affection. She knew that Edith rather liked meeting with difficulties for the sake of overcoming them, and enjoying the triumph of doing so. She knew that she was large-hearted, generous, and forgiving ; but she knew also that she was proud, passionate, and impatient of control. Any little exhibition of meanness or deception, which called forth an expression of sorrow or regret from Isabelle, elicited a flash of haughty disdain from Edith.

She sometimes pictured to herself the path of her two daughters through life. Isabelle quietly advancing through storm and sunshine ; overcoming evil with good ; never desponding ; light in her eyes ; love and gentleness in every word and action ; but with a strong brave spirit within that would enable

her to tread firmly upon any, even the sharpest thorns, which, to try her faith and prove her powers of steadfast endurance, might be planted in her path ; and, at the end, those thorns changing into sprays of amaranthe, and, woven into a garland, to be worn through eternity.

Edith might travel along the same path, for she had been placed in it ; had entered through the same crystal stream ; had received the same sacred sign upon her forehead, when she became a member of the Catholic Church ; but Mrs. Vernon thought that her path would be a more chequered one than her sisters. The proud spirit would rise and must be humbled ; enemies would be battled with, but she would fight them with her own weapons, until discipline had taught her that a strength not her own, must conquer them. She would stop to gather more of earth's flowers, and when they faded and lost their fragrance and beauty, as she grasped them, she would fling them from her impatiently. Mrs. Vernon's earnest prayer was, that when she had gone to her rest, her child might meet with one to guide and help her, whose powers of mind and self-government were equal to controlling and leading that proud young spirit.

One point in her character Mrs. Vernon had not yet discovered. The spring of many of Edith's actions was hidden, and therefore the actions themselves were unaccountable, and often puzzled those who thought they knew her best. She possessed, in a high degree, that extreme sensitiveness to the slightest act or word which jarred upon her feelings, that seems natural to some high, proud natures, and when those two characteristics meet in one person, they guard and support each other. Pride con-

ceals the wounded feelings, but it is not the cold, heartless pride, which no softening influence can bend ; but that which discovered and pruned by a judicious hand, would melt away like snow beneath the influence of a sunbeam. So far as this world is concerned, none need envy those in whom these feelings reign predominant. They suffer more than others can understand.

“Go to Edith and bring her back, Isabelle,” said Mrs. Vernon, after some little time had elapsed.

“Yes ; if you wish it mamma ; but she will come without my fetching her, and she will like that better than if anyone spoke to her about it. I am sure she will come.”

“Aye ; let her alone. I should like to see what her next move will be.”

“What would yours be, Harry ?” enquired Mrs. Vernon.

“I hardly know. Let me see. I should probably mount my pony and ride off all superabundance of what often ends in an explosion of some kind, or forget all about it.”

“No, Harry,” said Isabelle, “you would not do that. You would not forget, I mean ; not, at least, till you had done one thing.”

“What is that one thing ?”

“Being sorry for having done wrong.”

“Oh, well ! That comes as a matter of course when you have done what you know is wrong.”

“But the feeling is of no use unless embodied in word or deed,” said Mrs. Vernon. “It is unknown to others, and unless it assumes some practical form, in the way of reparation, it might not have any reality. It may be only a snare of the evil one to quiet conscience for a time.”

"Dare say you are right, Mamma. You and Isa always are ; but it is hard enough to remember what is right, without doing it. However, I don't exactly see what Edie has done, after all, to be sorry for."

"She will tell you herself I expect. I think I hear her footstep."

It was Edith's footstep that Isabelle heard, but not the light, buoyant tread which was generally heard when she moved. She walked along the hall in slow measured time, and the colour deepened on her cheek as she stepped out on the verandah ; but there was no hesitation in her manner, as she sat down by Harry, and looking ingenuously in his face, said,—

"I was wrong to go into a passion ; but, please don't laugh at me always, Harry."

"Well done, Edie ! That's better than I should have done," exclaimed Harry, "I shall forthwith begin to look up to you."

"You can't do that, I am hardly as high as your shoulder," was the merry rejoinder, and the cloud passed away from Edith's face as she spoke.

"Now," said Mrs. Vernon, looking pleased and happy, "we will not have a sad, grave vigil on the eve of a birthday. I shall tell you what I have been thinking about lately, and then Harry will see if it can be done. What say you to leaving Kooroona and taking a cottage near Adelaide for a time ?"

"The very thing I thought of myself. There is nothing to be done here now ; if there ever will be again is doubtful. Duncan says it will be years before the run recovers from this drought. He can take care of the place, and I might do something better myself in Adelaide than I am doing here. It is a good thing we saved what we did during those

good years. It is the old Egyptian story over again; but I should like to do better than Joseph was able to do. I should like to save our fat kine, instead of letting the lean ones devour them; and so I can, if I begin to do something else in time."

"We shall be able to do that, whether you do anything or not, Harry; but you are quite right in thinking of it. It is not well to be idle."

"But you could not live in Adelaide as you do here. The expenses would be much greater."

"We need not commence as rich people, though I should not think it right to live the life of a recluse, on your account. A change will do you all good, and be pleasant for you. There are only two obstacles to our leaving here; one, a little time will remove, and the other, I must see about, if we decide upon carrying out this plan."

"You are thinking of me, mamma," said Isabelle.

"Yes, dear; but the warm weather cannot continue more than two months longer. I would not let you undertake such a journey till you are much stronger."

"I think it is only the heat that makes me feverish now, and makes me feel so weak."

"Yes; but it would be imprudent to risk a hot journey, and having to stop on the road."

"I should say let us be ready to go by the end of March," said Harry. "How shall you like this move, Edie?"

"Very much. Can we take Tip with us?"

"Oh, yes; and the little ones. How shall you like a visit to the city, Tip?" addressing an old kangaroo, and seizing hold of her long tail. Tip did not seem to appreciate the act, any better than she understood the question.

"Will Mrs. Brown go with us, mamma?" inquired Isabelle.

"I think she will wish to do so, and she has been such a great help and comfort to me during the last three years, that I scarcely know what we shall do without her; but I would not leave Kooroona, except in her charge, without communicating with Mrs. Graham. It would not be right. That woman who was here as housekeeper when we came, was not fit to be trusted with property of any kind."

"It will be a great bore if Mrs. Brown won't stay here without us," said Harry. "It would be five months before you could have an answer from Mrs. Graham. I don't believe she would wish you to wait for that."

"Perhaps not; but that would make no difference. Everything belongs to Mrs. Graham. Every comfort that surrounds us is hers, and has been placed at our disposal and for our use. I must leave it in safe hands."

"I suppose you must. The next thing, then, is to learn what Mrs. Brown will do. I am almost afraid she will not stay. She is desperately afraid of the natives lately."

"She used not to be," said Isabelle. "She remained here when Mrs. Graham went to Adelaide."

"Yes; but Brown was shepherding on the run; and besides the poor fellows had not been so badly used in the north then, and were all friendly," replied Harry.

"That alters the case very much, and in addition she has never recovered the loss of her husband, following so quickly as it did the serious illness she had when we first knew her. Poor thing! Her loss was our gain; for a more kind and faithful servant



there could not be. She has been invaluable to me."

"She was glad, mamma, to come here," said Edith. "She has often told me so."

"Yes; I know. She said that as soon as she read my P.S. to the note I wrote on seeing her husband's death in the paper, asking if she knew anyone who would suit me as housekeeper, her first thought was that she would offer herself."

"She always reads the papers," said Harry, "and she will be more afraid of the blacks than ever when she sees the accounts in those that came to-day."

"More bad news from the north? I have not yet looked at the *Register*."

"Yes. Seventeen sheep have been killed by the natives at one of the stations. I think it is the same where, two years ago, they took possession of the only water in that part of the country; and then the blacks were driven to stealing it, as those who live at the station call it, or to abandon the district. If they did that, they gave up valuable hunting ground, and deprived themselves of food. The blacks have been taking sheep occasionally from that station ever since, and I don't blame them."

"I don't see how any right-minded person can," said Mrs. Vernon. "They have been cruelly treated."

"Not at all," rejoined Harry. "The settlers had a perfect right to keep their own. They could not help the natives not having water to drink in other parts of the country. That was no fault of theirs. Having bought the land from the Government all that was on it belonged to them; and it was for Government to find water for the natives, if the members thought it right to encourage them in idle-

ness, instead of making them provide for themselves. They are quite satisfied that they are not only doing their duty to themselves and their neighbours, but that they are very kind to the natives, and deserve great commendation for not hunting them and shooting them wholesale, as they do in Queensland. Here they only rob them of the means of existence, and punish those who are so wicked as to think it is no more harm for a black man to take a sheep when he is hungry from a white man, than it is for the white man to seize upon the black man's hunting ground and his only sure supply of water."

"I wonder the natives have not killed all the white people they meet," said Edith, her eyes flashing indignantly.

"Duncan told me the other day that his father knew of one case, where the black men used sometimes to take flour; and some was mixed with poison, and placed ready for them."

"Yes. That case was proved. The poor fellows took it and died. I should not have considered it any great crime to shoot the man who mixed the poison with the flour."

"That he deserved such a fate would not justify you, Harry, in taking the law into your own hands," said Mrs. Vernon.

"I should be very likely to do it, and take the consequences, if such a case as that came under my own notice."

"Have they secured the natives who took the sheep lately?"

"Two or three have been killed. Two shepherds tried to prevent the blacks from taking the sheep, there was a scuffle, and I daresay the natives used their waddies, for the shepherds report being 'un-

warrantably attacked,' and say that they had to use fire-arms in defence of their lives. The affray was reported to the nearest police station, and Government has been asked to order up a sufficient force to protect the settlers. It is said that between two and three hundred natives are marching down from the north, no doubt to revenge the death of those who were shot. I shall order the police off this run, if any of them come."

"I do not believe the natives would hurt us," said Mrs. Vernon.

"I am sure they would not. If those fellows from the north come on as far as this, all the tribes about here would tell them we were friendly to them. Wahreep tells me there are about a hundred camping within a few miles of us. He has had a message from the chief of his tribe to attend a corroboree, and to stay three days."

"I saw some black men at Wahreep's hut to-day," said Edith. "Koonid's sister is there. I told her to bring little Caudeto here to-morrow, and Koonid will send Muhnard. I said I would take care of them while they went to the camp."

"You will have enough of them," said Harry, "for the women will stay for the corroboree."

"Mrs. Brown and I have arranged it all; and the children are delighted. You know, mamma, that poor little Caudeto likes being here. Don't you remember how she cried one night when her mother fetched her away?"

"I attribute her liking to a house and the comforts of it to her being a half-caste. Muhnard evidently prefers being out of doors. When Wahreep first settled at the hut, she was always in the scrub, and would scarcely venture inside this house."

"And," said Isabelle, "Caudeto liked the house at once; said the carpet was soft, and it was cold in the wurley."

"Are they to dine with you to-morrow, Isa, and drink your health," said Harry.

"I have no objection; but I leave all the arrangements about black children to Edie. They will have some of the cake and plum pudding which Mrs. Brown is busy about, at any rate; and I expect that a game of play with Edith and Tip will be more to their taste than dining with us."

"I have just thought of something I must say to Wahreep before he goes," said Harry. "He will be off early in the morning. There is to be a grand kangaroo hunt to-morrow. When will you speak to Mrs. Brown?"

"Perhaps this evening."





CHAPTER XIX.

“ ANY happy returns of the day,” said Mrs. Vernon, entering Isabelle’s room earlier than usual.



“ Oh ! mamma ; are you dressed ? ” exclaimed Edith, springing up. “ I meant to be the first to say that to Isa, and I did not wake up in time. What is that, and where did it come from ? We have not had a parcel from Adelaide for a long time.”

Isabelle’s eyes had been fixed upon the object which called forth Edith’s eager enquiry, but she was quietly waiting to be told about what she conjectured was a birthday gift. It was a rather large cross, made of cedar, and mounted upon three steps. On the cross was a smaller one, intertwined with the sacred monogram, carved in bone or ivory.

“ This is Harry’s present for your own room, Isa. He said he thought you would like it to stand on the bracket which is opposite the foot of your bed.”

“ I should not have dreamed of Harry thinking of that ; but how nice of him ! ” said Edith.

“ He knew how much I always liked the one that was in the library at the Hermitage. I am so glad to have that.”

Isabelle was satisfied to look at her cross ; and no one who noticed the expression of her eyes could

have thought that her grave quietness resulted from indifference.

"So you like it, Isa?" said Mrs. Vernon, who had been looking at her daughter while she looked at the cross.

"I cannot tell you how much, mamma; but Harry will understand, or he would not have thought of getting that for me."

"How did he get it in this out-of-the-way place?" said Edith.

Mrs. Vernon smiled, as she put her arm round Edith's shoulders, who had darted out of her own bed as soon as she awoke, and perched on the corner of Isabelle's pillow.

"You will not be satisfied till you know all about it, Edie; but what puzzles you is a very simple affair. You remember Harry going to look at the Koonappa station a few months ago?"

"Yes."

"He met with a man there who was amusing himself by carving some small boxes very nicely."

"The same man who had two or three Latin and Greek books lying about, and some of Lamartine's works?"

"Yes, the same. In the course of conversation, Harry said he wished he could carve in wood and ivory, if he could he should set about something immediately. It ended in his saying that he wanted a nice cross with the monogram on it, and the man at once said it would be an amusement to him to make one, for he had nothing to do. It came a month ago. That is the whole history, Edie. And how are you to-day, dear?" addressing Isabelle.

"Better, thank you, mamma. I have had such a good night. May I get up to breakfast?"

"Lie still till after, or you will be tired before evening," said Edith. "I will come and help you to dress at ten o'clock. Won't that be better, mamma?"

"I think so."

"Very well," said Isabelle, submissively. "I shall soon be well now, I think. Mamma, would you please move that vase of everlastings, and put my cross in its place?"

Mrs. Vernon placed the cross on the bracket, and then took from the vase a few everlasting flowers and arranged them at the foot of the cross.

"That shall be our morning lesson," she said. "It is one we must all learn, and we cannot begin too soon."

"A lesson, mamma! I don't understand," said Edith.

"What is the difference between everlasting flowers and all others?"

"They do not fade and wither as others do."

"The French call them '*les Fleurs Immortelles*,'" said Isabelle.

"I think you can read the lesson, Isa."

"You mean, mamma, that everlasting flowers grow at the foot of the cross."

"Yes; there only. No flowers of earth will bloom in heaven, unless the shadow of the cross falls upon them here. You can think and talk about this some other time. Now, Edith, dress quickly."

"I must; for I have a great deal to do before ten o'clock."

Edith always had something to do. A great majority of persons would wonder what a young girl, who was emancipated from the regular routine of study, could find to do in the bush, or, indeed, any-

where, under similar circumstances to those in which Edith was placed. The secret was, that she did not live for herself. Bush life in Australia is a very different thing from life in England. Persons in all ranks, whether rich or poor, must wait upon themselves and work for themselves. Edith did that ; she read French and Italian for an hour every day with her sister, because Isabelle said she liked her to read with her ; she attended to household duties allotted to her methodically, because Mrs. Vernon wished her to do so ; she practised music regularly, because she liked it herself ; and the remainder of the day she rarely found long enough ; her pet animals, her flowers during the winter, and making strong, coarse clothes for the black women and children, fully occupied her time. For several months she had been engaged with some fine embroidery on white muslin, Mrs. Vernon often helping her. Isabelle had had a lingering attack of intermittent fever, and Edith would sit still in her room for hours together, working at her embroidery, which she said was to trim a dress, much to Isabelle's astonishment, for Edith always occupied as little time as possible in working for herself.

At ten o'clock, Edith, true to her appointment, went to assist Isabelle. On her arm was an elegant white dress—elegant from its simplicity.

"Isa !" she said, looking as she felt, bright and glad, "this is from mamma and me, and you are to wear it to-day."

Isabelle knew then why Edith had so steadily kept to her embroidery. Very fair she looked as she stood for a moment before the glass admiring the dress ; and Edith thought with pride and pleasure that she had a beautiful, as well as a very kind, dear sister,

while Isabelle thought of the affection of which her new dress was a token.

"I shall never like any other dress so well as this," she said.

Just then a slight noise at the door made her look round, and two little black heads were seen, which were quickly withdrawn.

"Those two little animals are like kittens," said Edith; "they follow me everywhere."

"Let them come in. Caudeto!"

"In honour of your birthday, Isa," Edith said, as her two dark favourites came slowly into the room, attired in bright scarlet frocks, and peeping from under their long black eyelashes. "Mrs. Brown has been superintending an extra washing and scrubbing, and Harry actually said, when he caught sight of them, he wished he could paint. Caudeto seems to have an idea that she has something on which she must take care of."

"It is a wicked thing for the government to neglect those children, and leave them to grow up as savages," said Isabelle, as her eyes rested on the little half-caste, who had sat down on the floor and opened a small picture-book which Edith had given her. Muhnard sat down by her side, and Caudeto began to tell her about the pictures, occasionally looking up at Edith when she could not remember the name of anything.

"They are so quick in learning anything," said Edith. "I gave them a little book each yesterday,—Muhnard has torn hers,—(Muhnard looked up with an odd twinkle in her bright eyes),—and told them the history of the pictures, and they remember it all. Caudeto goes through it over and over again, beginning at the first page, just as she repeats the letters

after me when I am teaching her to read. But come, Isabelle, Harry is waiting to see you before he goes out. Tip! how dare you come here? It's not allowed, you know."

Harry was standing in the hall doing something to his gun, when Isabelle and Edith, followed by the children and the kangaroo, came out of their room.

"You put me in mind of Noah and his family, and all the rest of them, going forth from the ark," he exclaimed. "How are you to-day, Isabelle? You look first-rate."

"Yes, I shall soon be well."

"You look more like getting well to-day than I have seen you. Many happy returns of it, Isa,"

"Thank you, Harry. I am so much obliged to you for the cross."

"You like it? I am glad of that. It is a queer birthday present though."

"You could not have given me anything I should like so well. It always does me good to look at the cross."

"I can't quite understand all your fancies, Isa."

"I don't think it is a fancy, Harry, it is a real feeling; and I am sure it is a good plan to have crosses where you can constantly see them. Have you not often noticed how much more we think about those things we see, than of those we only hear of occasionally?"

"Yes; we can't help it."

"And we cannot see the cross without thinking of all it means. Shall you go to see the corroboree to-night, Harry? Koonid has been telling Mrs. Brown that it is to be 'big one corroboree.'"


"I think I shall go; there is rather a large gathering of natives,—more than a hundred. It will be

something new to me to-night. To-morrow they will have the kangaroo dance, and the night after the crow dance. I cannot make out exactly what the performance is for this evening, so I shall go and see, and will give you a full, true, and particular account of it all."

The natives of Australia are, in almost every respect, the reverse of what they are supposed to be by those living in other quarters of the globe. Many of them are intensely ugly, but not more so—making allowance for the peculiar cast of the features and the black skin, which white people think so objectionable, probably because it is different to what they have accustomed themselves to think the right and proper colour for man,—than a very considerable proportion of the people of Europe. Few would venture to assert that one who had never been in England would form a correct opinion of the general appearance of English people, either from seeing an aristocratic beauty, or one born and nurtured among scenes of vice, and poverty, and misery. So it is in every country, and Australia is no exception; nor is there a greater difference between the celebrated Venus de Medici or the Apollo Belvidere, and the great mass of mankind, than there is between some engravings professing to be faithful representations of the native Australians, but more like ill-formed monkeys, with long shrunken arms reaching below the knee, and the tall active men, erect and straight as their own spears, who live in the wilds of Australia. Their powers of observation and of memory are wonderful in some respects; their quickness of perception is remarkable, and their ability to learn unquestionable; yet, with these natural advantages, they approximate more nearly to the lower animals in

their mode of life and general habits than perhaps any other race of men. They wear no clothing, except a loose opossum rug in the coldest part of the year ; the only employment of the men is hunting or fishing ; the only occupation of the women is sewing together the skins of the opossum, which they do very neatly by making small holes along the edges of the skins, and passing through the holes the long, thread-like sinews which they draw out of the tail of the kangaroo.

They have no permanent habitations ; they wander from place to place, apparently without any object but that of change. When they arrive at a spot where they choose to "sit down," for that is the literal meaning of the expression they use in place of the English word, "camp," they break down a few small trees, lay them on the ground in a circle, a foot or at most two feet high, leaving a wide opening on one side, and there they sit, doing nothing, when tired of walking about. These small enclosures of boughs they call wurleys. In the opening left they kindle their fires, to cook the animals killed in hunting, and to drive away the bad spirit while darkness lasts. They have no written language. Their nearest approach to that is cutting notches in the trees, which notches may denote so many moons or summers. Even that is a rare occurrence ; they take no notice of time. Not a memento remains of past generations ; not a trace exists of those who century after century have been born, and lived, and died on this vast island. A stranger might travel over its whole extent, and from all he can see, he might suppose that a race of savages had been recently imported and had spread themselves over the land. They believe in the existence of a good and



of a bad Spirit. If they have any form of worship it is obscure, but they have among them customs and legends, which seem to be remnants of traditions derived from those who lived in a remote period of time, handed down through successive generations, from the inhabitants of the scenes, sketched by the inspired writers of the Old Testament.

They have a tradition that their deity, Wyungare, sprang into existence a full-grown man ; that he was covered entirely with red ; and at the present day the ceremony of introducing a youth into the state of manhood, consists in covering his body with red earth and grease, so that he may resemble Wyungare. This legend and practice take the thoughts back to the time when the first man was created, and named Adam, which signifies red earth.

They have also a tradition of a flood. They say that their god, Nurundere, when pursuing his two wives who had forsaken him, called on the waters to arise and destroy them ; so the waters rose above the hills and they were drowned : but, Neppele, a great hero, drew his canoe to the top of a very high hill, from which it was transported to the heavens, and he remained for some time floating in "Wyrrewarre." This, they say, was caused by a part of the milky-way. Afterwards Neppele ascended to the heavens. They believe that some of their other heroes ascended to heaven without dying ; and they regard death as unnatural to man. They would never die if it were not for bad spirits. When one dies there is great mourning and lamentation ; cutting the hair and flesh in token of their sorrow. There is, however, a kind of sanctity attached to the hair. Boys are not allowed to cut their hair, lest they should lose their strength ; and

here again, a superstition of the Australian savage reminds us of other lands and other days, and we think of the hair of the Nazarite of old times. Like God's ancient people, the Jews, they address cousins as "Gelanowe," my brother; like them they have a law, "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." If blood be shed the wounded man takes a weapon and inflicts a wound upon his adversary, sufficient to draw blood, and the feud is ended, the injury redressed. Sometimes this is settled by private agreement between the contending parties, often by the judgment and sentence of the tribe. Revenge must be had for an injury, and a man is held justified in avenging himself on the brother of the one who injured him.

There is one custom among the Australians of a sacrificial character. It may not extend to all the tribes, but it prevails in some of them. Previous to starting on a hunting expedition, a wallaby is laid on a fire, and as the smoke ascends, the men standing around stamp on the ground with their feet, and raise a wild cry, prolonged, till it resembles a kind of chant; then they rush towards the fire, pointing with their weapons towards heaven, and shouting in chorus.

It is not a little singular that among these savages, isolated as they have been until within the last few years, the explorer, Stuart, detected three signs peculiar to the Freemasons. There is a strange mystery about these poor despised Australians; a mystery that time will not solve. Past generations have left less trace behind them than even the rain-drops and the rippling waves did upon the sands of the ancient world.

Revolted as are many of their habits and customs,



Mrs. Vernon and her family felt a deep interest in them, and the natives felt and appreciated the kindness with which they were always treated at Kooroona. Hungry and thirsty they often were during that long drought; and they went to the stations for relief; but they never took water at Kooroona without going to the house to ask if they might have it; never took a single chicken, though the temptation to do so must often have been strong, for when they made their wurleys, as they sometimes did, within a short distance of the house, the poultry seemed to delight in visiting them. Mrs. Vernon had no dread of them, though occasionally between two and three hundred assembled in the neighbourhood; but Mrs. Brown, while acknowledging that they behaved very well for savages, distrusted them; consequently when Mrs. Vernon spoke to her about remaining at Kooroona, she could not make up her mind to do so. She was very sorry, but she should be afraid. She did not know, she said, of what she was afraid, but she was, and she could not help it; so after talking the matter over, and Harry voting the delay a great bore, and Mrs. Brown's fancies a great nuisance, it was settled that no change should be made until they had heard from Mrs. Graham what arrangement would be satisfactory to her.





CHAPTER XX.



THE February mail brought letters from Mr. and Mrs. Graham.

"There appears to be more news in your letter than there is in mine," Harry said, addressing Mrs. Vernon, who was deeply engaged in reading the crossing of a second sheet.

"Yes. They have been staying in the Isle of Wight, and Mrs. Graham writes about it as if she were charmed with all she sees. Mr. Graham had been ill, and was ordered there for the

winter."

"He says nothing about that," said Harry. "He only writes about what he calls 'the disastrous results of the drought;' and tells me to take care of what we have saved, and not to despair—that one or two good seasons will bring the land round again. I know that; but our sheep are gone. That is the grand loss. Years must elapse before we can do again what we accomplished during the first three years, and all that time will be so much of life gone; even Edie will be an old woman before I can do what I wanted to do."

Mrs. Vernon saw what Harry was thinking of, and she did not wonder that he should regret for himself and his sisters, being shut out from the rest of the world during a great portion of the spring-time of

life. He did not care while things were prosperous, and he was accumulating that which he hoped would enable him some day to return to the home of his forefathers ; but the long waiting was chafing his spirit, and Mrs. Vernon was becoming anxious to change their residence.

"Does he say nothing about Alfred ?" enquired Isabelle.

"Only that he is getting on famously at Oxford. He had joined them for the Christmas vacation, a few days before Mr. Graham wrote. You can read the letter."

"Mr. Graham wrote that note hastily, Harry," said Isabelle. He only sent it to shew that he thinks about your disappointment.

"I suppose that was all," replied Harry ; "for he says nothing about his own loss, which is so much greater than ours ; and, though he can afford to lose it better than we can, of course he must be annoyed and disappointed."

Mrs. Graham's letter was a long one, and Isabelle thought, as she watched her mother's face while she was reading it, that there was something of grave and gay in it.

"No bad news, mamma, I hope ?" Isabelle said, as Mrs. Vernon gave the letter to Harry.

"I wish ladies would not cross their letters. It takes twice as long to read them," and Harry turned over the pages dismayed, or pretending to be dismayed, at the task before him.

"Shall I read the letter to you ?" asked Isabelle.

"Yes ; that will be best," exclaimed Edith. "Do, Harry, give Isa the letter, and then we shall all have the news at the same time. I always like to have a letter from Mrs. Graham."

"I require no pressing to avail myself of Isa's offer. I am infinitely relieved by it. I must have read it, for the reason that Mrs. Graham's letters are always worth reading, but I wish she would not cross them—it seems to be her particular weakness."

"She remembers something that she wishes to say, or that she thinks we should like to hear just when she is finishing, and perhaps thinks it will only occupy a few lines; and then she recollects something else. That is the way letters get crossed," said Edith.

No one could help smiling at Edith's explanation and defence, or at her eager exclamations as the letter was read. It made them all wish that they were in the Isle of Wight instead of at Kooroona. There was a message to Edith, that a box, which was then on its way to Australia, contained several pieces of winsey for clothing the natives, besides some presents for herself and Isabelle, and a few books from Alfred for Harry. Then she wrote of Alfred. "I cannot tell you," she said, "how glad I am that we came to England. Don't think I am forgetting Kooroona. I love that place as much as ever when I think of the past, but this is a beautiful land; the showers and sunshine keep it always green, and our home is like nothing in Australia. I can see that Frank likes it; we shall never return to the new world in the south, and I have ceased to wish it. If only on Alfred's account, I should stay here of my own free choice. It was of him I was thinking most when I said I was glad we had come to England. So much is learnt by seeing, and Alfred's enjoyment in visiting the old castles and ecclesiastical buildings, and learning the history of them and their founders is intense. He is just as quiet in manner

as he was when you saw him, but his deep feeling is not to be mistaken. In that respect he reminds me of Isabelle."

"There, Isa, is a very pretty compliment to you. Mrs. Graham thinks there is nothing on earth equal to Alfred."

"You liked him, Harry, and so did everyone," said Edith reproachfully.

"How I wish Alf could see and hear his indignant champion at this moment! Never mind, Edie; don't draw any more arrows from your quiver; the one you aimed at me should have been pointed in a different direction—at some creature of your own imagination. You know I think no end of Alfred; he is a first-rate fellow."

"Listen to this," said Isabelle. "But he has changed in many things during the last few years; at least I call it being changed, though Frank says, 'it is only that the boy's character (he always calls him 'the boy' to me), is being developed in a more congenial soil.' Frank is glad and sorry, but I think the former feeling predominates. I shall be content whatever Alfred does, for I am sure he will do right; but I am forgetting that I have not told you what Frank is glad and sorry about. Since he succeeded to this property, he has been pleased to think of Alfred as an English squire; the height of his ambition seemed to be, that, in years to come, he may be regarded by all around him as a good old English gentleman."

"Alfred now wishes to take Holy Orders. He says he thinks the Church has a great battle to fight in England; that she has been trammelled by the state, harassed by enemies within and without, and is now preparing for a great struggle. It is beautiful to see

his strong faith, his certainty that the Church will be victorious ; but then he says her members must work, and if need be, be ready to die for her. He will have wealth, which gives influence, and he has not only the will but an earnest longing to enter the ranks of the priesthood. Frank did not like the idea at first, it was new to him ; it seemed as if such a step would lead Alfred into another path than the one he had been picturing to himself ; but now he is beginning to think differently of it, and I am very glad, for Alfred would not have acted in opposition to his father's wishes, and I cannot help feeling he is making a right and wise choice. He asks me to say he shall probably write to Harry by next mail."

"What do you think of Alfred's choice, mamma?" enquired Edith.

"The same as Mrs. Graham does."

"But he will have to leave his old castle. He cannot be a clergyman and remain at home. He must live where his church is."

"I expect Alfred thought of all that, Edie—counted the cost of what he was doing, before he urged his father to consent to his wishes. I have no doubt from all I have seen and heard of him that he is quite capable of making the sacrifice you have mentioned ; but, on second consideration, I am not sure that one so high-principled as Alfred is, would have thought it right to cast aside the duties of his station, which he must have deputed to another, had he lived away from his estate. As long as Mr. Graham lives it would be of no consequence, but in the natural order of things Alfred will outlive his father. It is probable, I think, that the living of Elmwood is in the gift of the Graham family ; in which case, Alfred has a prospect of carrying out his

wishes to lead a higher life than that of a simple country gentleman, without setting aside the duties which are part of his inheritance."

"The Vicar of Elmwood is an old man," said Isabelle. "Do you remember, mamma, Mrs. Graham mentioning one winter that she thought he would scarcely live through many more cold seasons?"

"Yes; I recollect it now. I had forgotten it until you mentioned it."

Harry had not spoken since Isabelle laid down the letter. He was thinking of Alfred, and contrasting his position in England with his own in Australia. There was no envy; Harry was too generous and noble to entertain so unworthy a feeling; but, gazing northward, there was the picture of Alfred's bright career at Oxford, his castled home, his future destiny, which Harry felt would be in accordance with what had gone before; southward, he could see, at that moment, only a barren, parched land, and blighted hopes. He walked across the room and stood at one of the windows watching Wahreep repairing a fence at a little distance. A seeming trifle, what man would call a small thing, has sometimes changed the fate of nations, and arrested the progress of the mightiest potentates.

The poor Australian, happy and contented in his small pine hut; happy and faithful in the performance of his duties; thankful for what he received, changed the current of Harry's thoughts; he was himself again, just as Mrs. Vernon exclaimed—

"Lady Carleton is dead!"

"Has Sir John written?" said Harry, turning round quickly.

"No; my cousin Dora writes from the Hermitage.

She has been staying there for a month. Sir John had a large party assembled. Lady Carleton and Dora drove to the Furze Bank to see the hounds start, and something startled the horses. Dora sat still and tried to persuade Lady Carleton to keep her seat. She says she held her down as long as she could, for they were going down a steep hill at a frightful pace, and she knew there was more danger in jumping out of the carriage than remaining in it. However, Lady Carleton made a desperate effort to free herself, fell upon her head, and died about an hour after they had brought her home."

"How sorry I am for Sir John," said Isabelle. "He will be so lonely now ; no one he cares for to be with him."

"His nephew might have returned to England, Isa."

"No, Harry, I think not ; we should certainly have heard of it from some one, if he had. I have often wondered where he can be," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Why did he go off in the way he did, without letting anyone know ? Did you ever hear, mamma ?"

"He wanted, when he left Oxford, to travel ; anywhere, it did not matter so that he got away from England. His father, who you know was Sir John's only brother, was addicted to gambling and other bad habits, and he lost everything. They lived upon his wife's small income till she died, and then it appeared that by the advice of her brother, who was a barrister, her property had been so settled on her son, that the father could not touch it."

"What did he do then ?"

"Sir John made him an allowance, and he wanted his nephew to live with him ; but he said that as he could not live with his father, he would not live

with anyone else in England. I don't much blame him."

"Nor I," said Harry. "I should feel the same. So young Carleton became an Arab."

"Yes; Sir John could not be persuaded to view the matter in the same light as his nephew did, and was very angry. He was sorry afterwards, but it was too late; his nephew was gone, no one knew where."

"Why, he is Sir John's heir; he ought to be in England now. His father died two years ago."

"It is very unfortunate that he left no clue, for Dora goes on to say, she does not believe Sir John will get over this."

"And if he die before we are able to go back to the Hermitage, what will be done?"

"It will be lost to us, Harry; you know it."

"I don't feel as if I could stand that. I would rather have that place for my own, if I had to live on bread and water, and to cut down wood to make a fire, than live in comfort anywhere else."

"So would I, Harry," said Isabelle, her eyes kindling as she spoke. "Mamma, would it be possible, could you write to Sir John and tell him that Harry will be able some time to buy it back? It may be a great many years before he could, and if Sir John lives it would all come right, but if he should die—"

"The Hermitage will belong to a stranger. It is better to accustom ourselves to think of that."

"I never shall, mamma; I cannot. I do not mean that I cannot because it would make me miserable to think of our old home belonging to strangers, but I *feel* that it is ours still and will be Harry's home. I do not know what makes me feel

so, but I do. If Sir John die before it is all settled, it may make it more difficult for Harry; more money might be wanted, but Sir John would never leave it so that we could not have it back."

"I hope you are right, Isa; this delay is a great nuisance. I wish we could go to Adelaide at once."

"Why should you not go?" said Mrs. Vernon.
"There is nothing for you to do here."

"I shall not go till you do; I have thought about it and made up my mind, so don't say any more about that, mamma."

"I cannot think what you will do when you are in Adelaide."

"Nor I; I cannot see my way very clearly; it will be something like going into an enemy's country. All I know certainly is, what weapons I have to use. Whether I shall have an opportunity of making good use of them remains to be proved. I have not forgotten what I learnt at Eton."

"No; you have added to it. You need not think that the last few years of your life have been wasted."

"It has been dry work sometimes, but I felt that if I gave up all that a fellow must know in England, I should not be fit to stand in my father's place, if I ever had the chance."

"The benefit will be yours under any circumstances, Harry. As you say you have quite decided not to go to Adelaide till we go, and you have nothing particular in view, it will be just as well to ask Mr. Graham to use any influence he may have. We must wait for return letters; you may, through him, get an appointment in one of the Government offices."

"That is a good idea. I will write to Mr. Graham."



CHAPTER XXI.



ON a calm, warm evening in March, Isabelle was seated at a window reading Tennyson's "Idyls of the King." The hue of health had returned to her cheek, though she still looked rather delicate for a bush flower. Occasionally she raised her eyes, and looked out as if she were watching for some one. She appeared to be in a graver mood than usual, and to be trying to read to occupy time, and for the sake of doing something, rather than from any interest she took in the volume she held in her hand.

"It is a shame to read Tennyson in that way," she said at last, laying down the book, and turning again to the window, when she saw Harry emerging from a belt of low trees which grew in the direction of Wahreep's hut. Eagerly she sprang forward. "Harry, I have been watching for you a long time. I am so glad you are come. You have just seen Wahreep."

"No ; he is a mile or two away. I sent him out with Duncan. The tribes from the north are within a short distance of us. Have you heard ?"

"Yes ; Koonid told us."

"You are not afraid of them, Isabelle ?"

"No ; not unless they are made angry."

"Who is there to make them angry on this run ?"

Wahreep says his chief knows they are here, and has called his men together to meet them. I have sent Wahreep with Duncan to one of the huts, with orders to give them a few sheep, and to tell them we will let them have water."

"Yes; but Koonid has been telling us of two or three men that Meenulta has seen. From what she said, I think they must be policemen. All I am afraid of is that the natives should see them."

"I wish the fellows would keep at a distance; they have been making free use of their revolvers lately. I don't suppose it will ever be known how many they have killed. Wahreep has heard somehow that the blacks are infuriated with them, and are determined to have their revenge. Old Duncan has been told by a shepherd, that in the last skirmish, as soon as the natives rushed forward and threw their boomerangs, the revolvers were fired, and many fell. They were carried off into the scrub, whether dead or alive he did not know. If they find the police here we shall never be secure again. Where did Meenulta see those men?"

"Koonid did not know."

"Does mamma know what is going on?"

"No; her headache became so troublesome that she said she would lie down for a few hours. Koonid has been here since."

The long shadows of the tall gum trees were gradually becoming fainter, when three mounted troopers rode up to Koorona. Revolvers were stuck in their belts; they appeared to be in high spirits, and dismounted, as if sure of receiving a hearty welcome. They were not at all abashed by Harry's cool, haughty demeanour, as he strode across the verandah, and stood at the top of the

stone steps looking down upon them. He waited for them to announce their errand.

"Those savages from the north have marched down upon Kooroona."

"I am aware the fact," said Harry, who was trying to keep cool.

"So we have come to protect the place and drive them off."

"I am sorry you have taken the trouble; your being seen on the run is the only thing we are afraid of."

"Oh! you need not be afraid. A few shots," touching his revolver, "will soon frighten them."

Harry's eyes seemed to flash fire as the trooper spoke.

"We need no protection that you can give us," he said. "Our treatment of the natives will secure us, not only from personal violence, but from robbery."

The troopers laughed at the singular view which they thought Harry took of the case.

"You don't know the black fellows as well as we do."

"I think I know them better. Not a shot shall be fired at them on this run."

"Do you mean that?" asked one of the men, becoming serious from mere astonishment.

"I do mean it. Be kind to them and trust them, and they will repay it in the only way they can—by honesty and gratitude. To rob them of their land, and of the very means of existence, and then shoot them like dogs, for carrying off a few sheep in return, is a disgrace to humanity. My remarks are not intended to be personal," Harry said, on seeing one of the policemen look angry. "In coming here, I presume, you are but doing your

duty, attending to your instructions ; but the way in which a so-called Christian government, composed of men who have had the benefit of being born of a civilized race, if they possess no other advantages, have treated the native inhabitants of this land, is a disgraceful page in the history of its colonization. It is enough to make every honest man blush."

Harry suddenly stopped ; he felt that he was getting warm, and he intended to keep cool.

"I am sorry I cannot offer to lodge you for to-night, but I cannot do so without compromising myself. I will ask you to take supper with pleasure, but you must be quick over it and be gone, so that the natives I constantly employ about the place may be able to tell those from the north that you have been sent away."

"You will have cause to repent of this, young master," said the eldest of the troopers. "You will be glad enough to send for us or for some others before you are a week older."

"I shall not repent of what I am doing, let what will happen. I have sent some sheep to them already, and they shall have as much water as they want. The worst they will do here will be to complain of their grievances. Will you come in and have supper?"

Two of the men seemed disposed to avail themselves of the invitation, but the other sprang to the saddle. He was cast in a different mould to his companions. He had been born and educated as a gentleman, and though a wild and reckless career had caused him to fling aside, in many respects, the habits and manners of one, it had not destroyed all that was inherent.

"No, thank you, Mr. Vernon. The sooner we are off the better for you. I respect your sentiments, and I believe you are right. You are playing a trump card now, at any rate, and I hope it will win. If I had the opportunity, I believe at this moment I should follow suit. Good evening."

Before Harry could reply, the trooper had put spurs to his horse, and was some distance from the house. Then he pulled up, apparently waiting for the others to join him.

"I am sorry to appear inhospitable in this remote place," said Harry, whose indignation was wonderfully appeased by the last remark, "but these wild people judge by acts. They cannot believe that we mean only kindness, when they know that you are here prepared to shoot them if they do anything contrary to the white man's law, which I, for one, do not consider that they are bound to obey until we have Christianized them and made them understand our laws."

The troopers rode off after their companion rather sulkily, disappointed in losing a good supper, comfortable quarters for the night, and fine sport during the day in shooting blackbirds.

"I am so glad that you have sent them away," said Isabelle, who had been standing just within the hall, and heard all that passed. "I am not afraid of anything now; and you have done good too, Harry, in another way. I am almost sure that young man will never shoot the natives again."

"Perhaps this is the first expedition of the kind on which he has been sent. I will just step over to Wahreep's hut, and let Koonid know that I have ordered the police off the run. The news will soon spread."

Yes; and the poor natives will be pleased. It is more likely to prevent their taking anything than any other plan."

"I must see the chief of our tribe as soon as I can, and get him to make the others understand that I cannot supply them with sheep and water for an indefinite time. I should like to get them quietly off the run as soon as possible."

The next day, Harry, accompanied by Duncan and Wahreep, rode off to the encampment. Many of the men were hunting, but a majority of them, having had enough mutton to satisfy them, were lying about under the trees; spears, waddies, and boomerangs were scattered about on the ground. Some dark and gloomy looks were cast on Harry, who asked if there were any among them who could speak English. Only two came forward—tall, strong men. One glanced furtively at Harry, and then at his companions; the other confronted the white man boldly, and looked at him openly, almost sternly. To him Harry spoke, fearlessly but kindly; told him what he would do and what he could not do; that if they remained in the neighbourhood they would have to supply themselves with food by hunting; that he would give them water, and would trust them as he did all the black men he knew. Little by little the stern look faded away.

"Three troopers came to my house last night," he said at last.

In a moment the countenance of the wild man changed,—hatred, fury, and revenge were visible.

"To shoot black fellow, eh? White fellow come and take black fellow's country, and kill em kangaroo and wallaby, and take em water, and den

shoot black fellow. Me kill 'em," shaking his spear as he spoke.

"No," said Harry; "if I saw a white man shoot a black one I would have the white man hung. You are all safe here. I sent the troopers away. They came because they thought you would attack me and take my sheep, and I said I knew you would not do either. I should trust you."

"And they gone—gone to Adelaide?"

"Yes; I did not let them stay; so," and Harry laid his hand on the man's shoulder, "you can have a corroboree, and I will give you more sheep, and some of you may come to the house for tea and sugar; and then, when you have had some hunting, you go away, and I shall tell the white men in Adelaide not to send more troopers."

When Harry was telling Mrs. Vernon and his sisters of his visit to the native encampment, and of his interview with the northern savage, he said he could not describe the effect of his last words. All bad feeling died out of the man's face, and left only an expression there which, said Harry, "gave me a lump in my throat; if I had been a woman, I believe I should have cried."

"Poor things!" said Mrs. Vernon. "I wish I could see any way of benefitting them permanently, but I cannot. I have thought of it often, and each time I see more clearly that the government is to blame. When Englishmen took possession of Australia, they had no right to drive the natives before them off all the good land, destroy their hunting grounds to supply themselves with firewood, seize upon every spot where water is to be found, and drive the rightful owner to die of hunger and thirst, or to take what he can get when he has

an opportunity, and then blame him for doing so to preserve his life."

"It would be well," said Harry, bitterly, "if that were all, but it is not all. They threaten and beat them for attempting to take a few sheep in return for all the white man has taken from them, and if they attempt to defend themselves they are shot, or handcuffed and bound by chains, and dragged a distance of two or three hundred miles, men and women alike made to walk by the side of a mounted trooper just as fast and as far during the day as he chooses to ride, to be tried by laws they never heard of. England is a great nation, but some of her sons are great rascals,—neither honour nor honesty form part of their creed."

"The rulers and legislators of South Australia would scarcely allow that you had formed a correct estimate of their character, Harry."

"Do you think I have formed a wrong one?"

"No; I am obliged to think as you do. There may have been greater cruelties practised on the natives in other parts of the world than there have been here."

"*Generally*, you should say, mamma. Some individual cases that have been proved are as bad as they can be."

"Well, generally, then; but as far as I am able to judge from newspaper reports, and from all Mr. Graham told me, no race of men has been worse treated than the Australian. We have proved their honesty beyond a doubt; it is far above the average of English domestics and traders. They are quiet and harmless if treated kindly; they are capable of improvement, and yet civilized men, calling themselves Christians, do nothing but drive them farther

into the interior, and excuse themselves by saying that the natives are a degraded race, doomed to die out before the white man."

"I suppose you know," said Harry, "that two of the clauses of the 'Instructions to the President Commissioner' by the founders of South-Australia, directed that one-tenth of the proceeds of the sales of all waste lands should be set aside for the benefit of the natives."

"I knew that there was some law of that kind. Mr. Graham mentioned it, and said the regulation had been most shamefully violated; that the Government made an insignificant grant annually, a great part of which was paid in the form of salaries to white men, who were called Protectors and Sub-Protectors of Aborigines."

"Yes; and a great farce that is," said Harry.

"Besides which, Mr. Graham said, and I well remember *how* he said it, that they generously gave blankets once a year in Adelaide, to those natives who did not mind the trouble of walking a few hundred miles to receive them."

"And the men, whose consciences allow them to act in this way, are great professors of religion. The 'religious element,' to use a favourite expression in this colony, is prominent in all they say. If I ever have an opportunity I mean to get some one who has influence to go into this subject, and I have been collecting all the authentic information I can."

"How do you get any here, except from the natives?" enquired Isabelle.

"From the newspapers. Here is a scrap I cut out the other day, bearing upon the very point Mr. Graham mentioned to mamma. The editor of the *Register* says,—

“We learn from information kindly supplied by the Commissioner of Crown Lands, that—during the year ending 13th June, 1866, there has been sold the following quantity of land :—In 16 townships on the sea-coast, and within hundreds, 428 lots, realizing £5,148 15s. ; of suburban lands, 382 lots, realizing £21,134 5s. ; and of country lands, 2,894 lots, realizing £485,012, making a total area of 319,997 acres sold, realizing £511,295,—an average of £1 12s. per acre ; of which 269,952 acres were sold at auction for £459,899 10s.,—an average of £1 14s. 0¾d. per acre ; and 50,045 acres by private contract, at an average of £1 0s. 0¼d. per acre ; making a total area of 3,345,879 acres alienated by the Crown, 77,074 acres open to purchase by private contract within the settled districts of the province, and 241,906,267 acres yet to be dealt with. The lands offered at auction during the year comprise about 326,000 acres, of which but 6,000 acres remain unsold.’

“Now,” said Harry, “there is a nice little sum gained by the sale of the black man’s land in one year, and yet the same editor, who gives these details on the authority of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, says, in another number of his paper,—

“‘We may point out that the ‘men in Parliament,’ notwithstanding ‘the fleeting political topics’ in which they are absorbed, vote about £5,000 a year for the natives, and this is in addition to money raised by charitable people out of doors.’

“Wonderful liberality that is ! it would have been better not to have pointed it out, as the light issuing from the Crown Lands’ Office revealed its true proportions. Then the editor goes on to say,—

“‘Still it is lamentably true that the aborigines in the north have been shamefully neglected. It is therefore the duty of the Government to spend more money and to use increased exertions. The Select Committee of the Legislative Council, which took evidence on the subject of the aborigines in 1860, recommended the appointment of Sub-Inspectors in all localities where the natives were numerous,

and, in addition to this, the appointment of a Chief-Inspector, who should really go amongst the various tribes, and make himself thoroughly acquainted with their wants. The Committee examined seventeen or eighteen well-informed witnesses, besides several aborigines, and the conclusion arrived at was that the Parliament did not vote sufficient money, and that the Government did not supply enough food and clothing for anything like the number of natives who required assistance. A few feeble efforts have been made to act upon the views of the Committee, but they fall miserably short of what is wanted, as may be seen by looking at the present condition of the natives throughout the north."

"I have just finished Sturt's travels in the north," said Isabelle. "He was the first white man who visited that part of the country, and he speaks of the kindness he received from the natives. He had but two or three companions, and when he met a large number of blacks near Cooper's Creek, and trusted them and camped near them, they all treated him well and kindly."

"Yes," said Edith, "and don't you remember that when those other explorers, Burke and Wills and King, were found in a helpless state, almost dead from the privations they had endured, the natives supported and fed them as long as they remained at their camps?"

"I have been trying," said Harry, "to learn whether there is one single case on record of the natives injuring a white man unless provoked to do so by some great wrong, and I cannot hear of one. Their conduct to the settlers has been characterised by kindness and goodwill in every instance that I have heard of, until wronged by them, except in cases where they have been supplied with brandy, then they become mad for a time and will do anything."

"Yes; but white men are as bad, Harry. Besides white men give the natives what maddens them, so they are to blame even in those cases," said Edith.

"Of course they are; it is abominable the way in which the natives have been treated. Mamma, did you read a letter in the *Register* some time ago about the dispute in the north?"

"I think not."

"Then I should like you do so. I have it among my other papers on this subject. Shall I read it *pro bono publico*?"

"Yes, do, Harry," said Edith. "I should like to hear it."

"The letter is addressed to the editor, and the writer says,—

"I have read your editorial remarks on my advocacy of an amelioration of our public policy as regards the aborigines of this province. In that article you express a hope or conviction that my description of the treatment those unfortunate people have had to endure at the hands of this colony of professing Christians was overdrawn or exaggerated, yet that you believe me incapable of so doing. In subsequent issues of your paper, you give accounts of the recent conflict between the aborigines of Perigundee and Mr. ——'s party of colonists from Lake Hope; and I beg to point out that all the accounts of that conflict which have been published bear out all that I had upbraided the colony with. They, in fact, contain a concise illustration of the public policy of South-Australia in her onward march to acquire a title to the land within her limits by the simple process of destroying the aborigines, and without the slightest pretence of attempting to give them any consideration for it or to leave any portion of it for their use, no matter how absolutely necessary it may be for affording them the barest means of subsistence.

"When I first endeavoured in August last to enlist the sympathies of South-Australians on behalf of the aborigines, you stated that they were not neglected; and in proof of it, quoted the Royal Instructions issued for the guidance of the

Colonial Governors, when the charter was granted for establishing the colony. You omitted to say that those instructions had never been heard of by the aborigines, and are never in any way attended to by the Governors for whose guidance they were issued. In lieu thereof, our Colonial Government, acting on a simple rule of thumb, lets to anyone applying for it a tract of 100 square miles of country, at a rental of £5 per annum for two years, and of 10s. per square mile per annum for the succeeding 14 years. The Government never takes the trouble to examine the land before letting it, or to ascertain the effect that the letting it will have on its aboriginal inhabitants. It may be, as it often is, that a block of land contains within its limits a lake, spring, or water-hole, which, both to the aborigines and to the animals on which they depend for a supply of food, is absolutely necessary for their existences. The land being thus let by Government, the tenant proceeds to take possession, and to carry out his simple object of making it pay him during the currency of his lease. Perigundee, as reported in the papers, is an illustration of the process. Mr. — and his party proceed there to occupy the shores of the lake as a cattle run. They first warn the aborigines to go away; they then burn their residences to ensure their going away. They then take their cattle to the lake. The aborigines, resenting this summary ejection from the country of their forefathers, make a night attack on their invading enemy, and are driven off by the immense superiority of the weapons of their foes. A strong party of police is to be sent up to give the rightful owners of the soil more of this barbarous payment for their lands, and no doubt we shall in due course hear that the chieftains are caught, and like so many wild dogs, being secured by an iron chain fastened at one end to an iron collar rivetted round the neck, at the other to the horse of a police-trooper, are in that manner dragged on foot a distance of 600 miles to undergo the mockery of a trial, and the cruel sentence so recently imposed on the old man Archie.

“As to the merits of this recent conflict, I beg to state that on my visit to Lake Hope, in July last, I observed that, although I saw large numbers of the aborigines, I did not see a single garment on either man, woman, or child. I believe that they subsist chiefly, if not entirely, on fish, to obtain which they have stake nets of upwards of 100 feet long and four deep, netted precisely like those of European fishermen, and made of rushes. Their wurleys, which are stated

to have been burnt, are formed substantially of stakes and a sort of wattled work, and are then thickly plastered over with clay; they are in the form of half a globe, with a hole on one side for entrance. Into this several natives enter at night and they draw a bush into the entrance and light a small fire inside; and from my own experience of the intense cold of that dry, arid country at night, I can well imagine the anger of the natives at finding these their houses burned, and themselves left to sleep out without any covering, especially when the only consideration they received is stated to be summary ejectment from their lake, on which they absolutely depend for food and drink.'"

"There," said Harry, "is one example of the way in which the natives of South-Australia are treated. The writer sums up the affair by saying,—

"So far as Mr. —'s party is concerned in this business, they appear simply to have obtained from the Government a title to occupy the country with cattle. —'s party defended their lives from this attack, and they have a right to demand that the Government place them in peaceable possession of the demised land. It is for the Government to do justice to the aborigines, and arrange with them for the cession of the land. It is a slur on our parliamentary self-government that before its establishment our Governors, particularly Grey, Robe, and Young, personally interested themselves in seeing that the aborigines were kindly and fairly treated, and they were so treated; but they have been practically ignored since.'"

Harry folded the paper from which he had been reading, replaced it among others on the same subject, and flung the case upon the table before him.

"It makes me wish," he said, as he rose and walked across the room impatiently, "that one had the power to do something, or that one could clear off altogether—leave the colony."

"The writer of that letter," said Mrs. Vernon, "is quite right in saying that it is the duty of

Government to do justice to the aborigines, not only because they have the Royal Commission to do so, but because they derive all the revenue from the sale of land. I believe it is because it is not really the right way to do the work, that the private efforts made by individuals for the benefit of the natives, have not a larger measure of success. Succeed they do, to a certain extent, as we may be sure they would, for the motive which induces anyone to commence a difficult task, under discouragements of all kinds, must be high and pure, and the work and design are good, and God will and does bless such work; but not the less will He make it plain, in some way, that he who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind. This storm in the north, all the angry passions that have been roused, are but the results of disobeying the command of Royal Authority; the neglect of a plain duty, and the working of a grasping, mercenary spirit; a cold, heartless policy."

"What specially disgusts me," said Harry, "is that the men who manage the affairs of the colony, and expend the public money, are all methodist preachers of some kind."

"Not quite all, Harry," said Mrs. Vernon in a deprecating tone.

"Well! if they are not all actual preachers, you constantly see their names in the papers as speakers at meetings and tea fights, where they profess to feel the deepest interest in every conceivable good deed that man ever has done or can do under the sun; their love for everybody is unbounded, and their compassion for everyone, who does not think precisely as they do, is unlimited; while their feelings of unmitigated horror at everything sordid and

selfish are awful to contemplate,—that is, if we could believe their existence.”

“Harry, Harry!”

“You cannot believe them. Even you, mamma, cannot suppose they mean what they say.”

“No doubt they become excited, and are led on to exaggerate their feelings.”

“Of course they get excited; indeed, I don’t see how anyone could keep cool when a methodist tea-fight is raging furiously. The flow of hot tea on one hand and of heart-rending oratory on the other, I should believe to be more than any man could stand, if I did not know that some of those who profess the most are the very men who will go home and sleep off the effects of the tea, and get up the next morning to assist in some little arrangement for robbing the natives of a further portion of their territory. You see, I have read the South Australian newspapers to some purpose, mamma; what common sense I have, I have brought to bear on the revelations of the press. I am not answerable for the result.”

“I fully admit the inconsistency of which you speak, Harry; it is too apparent to pass unnoticed. It is unfortunate that high profession and practice so seldom go hand in hand.”

“Do they ever, mamma?” said Isabelle. “It seems to me that those who do all the real work never profess anything. I can only judge from reading; but the best people I have read of are content to let their work speak for them. Besides, when persons are always talking of what they have done, or would like to do, they are occupying time which might—”

“Be better employed in doing it. I have finished

the sentence for you, Isa," said Harry ; "your idea is so exactly in accordance with my own, that there is but one way of expressing it. How is it, mamma, that you so often agree with Isabelle and differ from me, and yet Isa and I almost always think alike?"

"I think, Harry, you could answer that question yourself if you reflect for a moment. It is not, in this case, that I disagree with you in principle,—I should be very sorry if you thought differently,—but you use such strong language, that those who do not know you well may think you bitter and cynical. No one would think that of Isabelle."

"Isa bitter ! that is an amusing idea," said Harry, laughing.

"But, mamma, I do think all that Harry said. I felt it all, though I might not have said it," rejoined Isabelle.

"Very good. You see, mamma, Isabelle is a second Diogenes in disguise. When I set up my tub and retire from public life, I shall get another for her, and all that we will require from the rest of the world will be that it will not stand between us and the sunshine."





CHAPTER XXII.



WEEK passed. Sometimes the natives were seen in large numbers among the trees not far distant from the house, but they molested no one, took nothing ; received from Wahreep or Duncan as much water as they required, and Mrs. Vernon gave all she could spare from her own stores of flour, tea, and sugar. Harry had given some clothes to the man to whom he had spoken when he first visited their encampment, and he had been to the house several times.

He was a brother of the chief, and his intelligence and gratitude for the few favours bestowed,—and Mrs. Vernon never gave him anything without feeling how little all she could give was in return for what the white settlers had taken from him and his people,—made her regret more than ever the policy of the misguided men who were driving the natives into rebellion and rousing all the worst feelings of a savage nature, instead of trying to raise them in the scale of humanity by drawing forth and encouraging the good that is in them.

She knew that it was true, that those who have not learnt to govern themselves are unfit to govern others, and she was not surprised, therefore, that those who had separated themselves from the Church,—the teacher appointed by God ; those who




had cast aside all restraint, who acknowledged no rule in religion or politics, who, self-wise, made their own creed, and tried to make laws to suit their own ideas of right and justice,—should commence their reign of misrule by disobeying their Queen, and get into a labyrinth of discord and confusion. She was not surprised, but she grieved more than ever over the fatal error they were committing in reference to the natives, when she saw, in her intercourse with the northern savage, Wanganneen, how much could be done by kindness.

“Wanganneen,” she said to him one day, “we cannot give you much more. I am sorry, but when all we have is gone, what shall we do? If we come to you and ask you for food and water, can you give us any?”

The black man looked at her—then smiled, but it was a sad smile, such an one as makes the heart ache, and shook his head. He did not go to the house again. That man, born and reared in the wilds of Australia, was one of nature’s gentlemen. The white man may scoff at that remark, he may plume himself upon being a Solon or a Lycurgus, one who would confer dignity upon any ancient order of nobility, if haply such a thing could descend to so low a level, rather than he be dignified by it, but he would be mistaken—such men know themselves as little as they can understand in what true nobility consists. When Wanganneen came no more, and Mrs. Vernon knew that he had spoken to his tribe, and that they would have one big corroboree and then go away, she thought, and she was right, that the untaught Australian had God’s own patent of nobility. Harry went to see the black man’s corroboree. It was full moon. Round,

bright, and cloudless she rose, and hid the light of stars which, in her absence, shine so gloriously in their far off orbits. It was one of those nights which those who have lived in Australia cannot forget, and might long to enjoy again when far away from that land of the south. Low down, not very far above the horizon, was the southern cross. Why travellers have written, as some have done, about that constellation, representing it to be as striking as it is beautiful, it is difficult to imagine. It is not to be compared with other constellations. There is not a star of the first or second magnitude in it; but, for a traveller's tale, it would be unrecognized and unheeded among the other constellations which spangle the heavens above the southern hemisphere. There are, however, some among those who have seen it, who always look for it; to them it is *the* constellation of the south—the sign of the Son of Man—far above, yet ever near the earth, lingering as it were, on earth's confines—possessing no brilliance to attract the eye, but shining as God's love did, when veiled in that Humanity which died on the Cross of Calvary,—shining brightly and steadily to those who looked for it,—unseen and uncared for by the world. So with Christ's body, the Church. She is seen but dimly through the mists and vapours of earth, the heresies and schisms of men, by those who do not belong to her or seek her; but her light shall never be extinguished, the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. She is what she has ever been and what she will be to the end of time; what the pillar of fire and the pillar of the cloud were to the children of Israel and to the Egyptians,—a light to her own, those who are sealed with the sign of the Cross,—a cloud and darkness to the world.



Harry had not begun to think deeply. The very young rarely do ; but the calm, bright night, the stillness of nature, and the glorious, far-off beauty of the heavens, presented such a striking contrast to the scene in the forest,—the wild men around their large fires, on which they were piling wood to make the flames rise higher,—that a feeling of sadness stole over him in spite of himself. He hardly understood it. Isabelle would have felt the same and could have explained the cause, but she was not there, and Harry did not attempt to analyze his feelings. A wild shout of welcome greeted him, it rose in chorus, quite spontaneously from the natives. Those who have been thus greeted, feel that it is something hearty and real, as different from the artificial greeting of cold politeness, as solid English oak is from veneer and French polish.

Harry did not go empty handed. A cart followed him. Sheep, roasted whole, an abundant supply of plain substantial cake, which Isabelle and Edith had been helping Mrs. Brown to make, with tea and sugar, were quickly taken from it, and very soon disappeared and then the corroboree commenced. It was a wild scene ; the dark forms of the actors, hideously painted with streaks of white paint, feathers of the emu bound on their heads, and sprays of the gum tree on their legs and arms, were gradually marshalled in order, in front of, but at some distance from an old chief, who, seated on the ground, held upright before him a thick, heavy stick, about four feet in length. It was made of some yellow kind of wood, and had been cut away on two opposite sides, so as to leave a flattened but rounded surface, on which were burnt in, or carved with a sharp edged stone, a number of curious marks, having, no doubt,

some mystic meaning. On either side of the old chief were other natives, seated in the form of a crescent, who, upon a signal from the chief, commenced striking their waddies, and singing an extraordinary chant, like nothing else in the world, a chant to be heard only in Australian wilds. When the chant commenced the principal actors in the scene were lying on the ground at some distance from the singers. Very slowly and gradually each raised his right leg, then his left, diagonally; this was repeated several times. Simultaneously, all sprang to their feet and rushed forward, stopped as suddenly as they started, then retreated. They advanced again more slowly, and again retreated. When this had been repeated several times they commenced dancing, occasionally imitating the movements of some wild animal. There was no confusion; every movement was in perfect time. When stamping on the ground with the right foot, the leg advanced as far as possible, the sound was as the ponderous tread of one man. Several times an unearthly yell was raised in chorus, and the performance suddenly ceased for a while, to be resumed when the old chief again commenced chanting.

Harry was trying to make the chief understand that he had been much pleased with the entertainment, when it became evident that something unusual had happened. A crowd had gathered round a fire which was burning some distance apart from the rest, and the news soon spread through the encampment, that a man who had been ill for several days was dead. Then there arose a cry of wild lamentation; a great cry, such as was heard in Egypt in old time.

The northern natives had arranged to leave

Kooroona the next day, but the evil spirit had come among them and they must have two days of mourning ; days for lamentation and weeping, for cutting their hair and flesh in token of sorrow. The body was to be buried the next morning, and Harry, as a great favour, was allowed to be present. Already the dead man's knees were drawn up and tied down tightly on his chest, and the body laid upon its left side, with an opossum rug thrown over it. There it was left for the night.

When Harry arrived at the camp on the following day, he found the natives waiting for him. The chief gave orders for starting, and immediately one of the blacks set fire to the dead man's wurley. Then they moved off ; six men carrying a bier made of the boughs of trees, on which the body was placed, and they slowly marched into the trackless forest, followed by all the natives. After proceeding a short distance, the chief gave a command ; all stopped, and turned round several times ; this was often repeated as they penetrated farther into the scrub. At length orders were given to stop and make the grave. While that was being done, some of the natives kindled a fire, and covered the body with green boughs. The grave having been dug, and the bottom of it covered with sprays of leaves, the remains of the black man, with all he possessed, his hunting spear and his war weapons were laid in it ; the green boughs were spread over all, and pressed tightly down, and the hole filled up with earth. Piteous howling and wailing resounded on all sides ; a huge fire was made a considerable distance from the spot where the body was buried, and the men who dug the grave, rushed from it towards the fire, shouting as they did so, and trembling with

fear. They knew not Him Who has conquered death and sin ; Who has robbed death of his sting and the grave of its victory ; and as they believe that their night-fires drive away the evil spirit, so they believe also that the rushing to and fro from a newly-made grave to the fire kindled as it is filled up, will keep death from them.

Harry Vernon had stood beside his father's grave ; he had heard the earth fall upon the coffin lid ; he had felt the void which death had made, but beyond all that was the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection to eternal life, of a joyful meeting in another and better land, where the sun shall no more go down ; but beyond the grave of the poor savage were only gloom and uncertainty, and the thought crossed his mind that the white man may have been permitted to possess the wealth of Australia, that he may give to the original possessor that which would secure him treasure in heaven. One generation had passed away since South-Australia, the youngest of the Austral colonies, had become the property of European settlers, calling themselves Christians. What had they done for Him Whose Name they bore ? Harry knew that the question would be asked and answered at that bar where every man must one day stand and give account of the deeds done in the body.





CHAPTER XXIII.



NOT far from Wahreep's hut, Meenulta had made a more substantial wurley than the southern tribes care to have, as a rule, and there he lived with his lubra and her half-caste child, Caudeto, many months during the year; the remainder of the time he wandered from place to place with his tribe. The second day after the funeral of the native, Yalluna, Meenulta went with some of the men from the north for their last hunting expedition at Kooroona. As he was returning to his wurley in the evening he heard in the scrub the cries of a native woman. He listened, and recognized the voice of Koonid, his brother's lubra. He rushed forward in the direction of the cry he had heard, which was not repeated immediately, the woman having probably been silenced for a time by the blows which some of the natives inflict unsparingly on the lubras they occasionally steal from different tribes. As Meenulta approached the spot he saw a tall, strong man dragging Koonid along. It was the man who had stepped forward with Wanganeen the day Harry first visited the camp, whose furtive glances and sinister expression had made him turn away and address himself exclusively to Wanganeen. Meenulta cautiously drew near, waited till an opening among the trees

enabled him to take a sure aim, his spear flew through the air, and the savage fell on the ground. Meenulta had aimed at his right arm, intending to disable him, but the man stooped at the moment, and the spear struck his head. He was stunned, but not mortally or seriously injured, the spear having grazed the crown of the head, taking off some of the skin and hair.

Koonid, released, flew to the house, where her child had been since the morning, and Mrs. Vernon would not let her return to the hut for several days, and until it was known positively that all the northern blacks had quitted the neighbourhood. Meenulta only stayed to assure himself that the man was not killed, and then, taking up his spear, he ran quickly towards his wurley. No one was there; his lubra was, he expected, gone for some of the little things which Mrs. Brown gave out daily to those who worked on the run. He knew that when the man he had left in the scrub recovered from the shock of the sudden blow, he would be furious, and probably during the night would return to Koonid's hut. He made a few marks on the floor of his wurley and on the bark of a tree which stood near, took up his waddy and his boomerang, stood for a moment at the entrance of his rude dwelling place, and then went to Wahreep's hut. The spear he had used in hunting was Wahreep's, and laying it across the rough timber which supported the roof of the hut, whence he had taken it in the morning, he again made some marks on the ground, went out, and was quickly lost among the trees that grew in an opposite direction to the scrub in which he had left his enemy lying.

A week passed away quietly; the northern tribes had left Kooroona; Wahreep and Koonid were again

in peaceable possession of their hut ; and Meenulta's lubra was in daily expectation of his return, which she knew would be before many more days elapsed. Poor Mrs. Brown had been in a state of great excitement. From the moment she heard Koonid's tale she expected to see an army of natives surrounding the house, burning it to the ground, and murdering indiscriminately everyone who attempted to escape from the flames. Harry laughed at her fears, which made her worse ; and Mrs. Vernon's assurances, that as soon as the news of what had happened reached the camp it would be more likely to hasten their departure than to delay it, were of no use. "They were savages, and they would act as such ; that was her opinion,—it always had been, and it always would be, and Mrs. Vernon would find out some day that she was right." Even after Wahreep,—who was, she reluctantly admitted, to be fully trusted, and was a good sort of man for a black,—told her they were all gone, and that he had seen the man who tried to steal Koonid go with them, she continued to make her puddings and tarts in fear and trembling, under the full impression that *something* would happen to prevent anyone eating them. She was beginning to think that the danger to which she still insisted they were all exposed was not quite so imminent as she at one time believed it to be, when Duncan reported that the body of a white man, who, from the marks on his head and various other parts, had evidently been murdered, had been found in the scrub a few miles from Kooroona, not many yards from the mail track. A shepherd, in company with two natives of the Kooroona tribe, had left the track in pursuit of a kangaroo, and nearly fell over the body, which was lying with the face on the ground. A message was

despatched immediately to the nearest police station, and Mrs. Brown emphatically pronounced a verdict of guilty against the natives. It was not that she thought them all bad, or that she would not be kind to them and do them justice individually, but, like many foolish, weak-minded persons, she allowed terror to make her unjust.

Mrs. Vernon, who was present when she made the remark, fixed upon her a look of unmistakable displeasure, and the first angry words addressed to her since she had entered Mrs. Vernon's service fell upon her astonished ears, as Harry indignantly asked her "how she dare make such an unfounded statement, and accuse innocent people of the crime of murder?"

She looked at Mrs. Vernon, then at Isabelle and Edith, but, though they did not speak, she felt that their eyes were asking the same question, and she retired from the scene to sit down in her own room and cry.

"Poor woman!" said Mrs. Vernon; "you spoke very sharply to her, Harry, but she deserved it, and it will do her good, perhaps."

"The police will be ready enough to suspect the natives, without hearing any remarks from the servants," replied Harry.

"Have you any idea how long the body has been lying there?" enquired Mrs. Vernon, turning to Duncan.

"I asked the shepherd, but he only said it could not have been there long, it seemed so fresh; but he did not dare to touch it as there were only two blacks with him who did not know English."

"Where are they?" said Harry.

"Who, sir,—the blacks?"

"Yes."

"Jones made them come right away with him ; he said he thought they might clear each other somehow ; Wahreep could help, as he knew English as well as his own language. You see, sir, it is an awkward thing for one man to find another murdered and very likely robbed in a lone place like that."

"Jones and the two natives must be brought here at once," said Mrs. Vernon, "and remain until the police arrive. Don't you think so, Harry?"

"Yes ; you had better see about that, Duncan ; we must not lose sight of the natives ; and you had better tell Wahreep not to go far away from the house ; he may be wanted at any moment to-morrow."

"I suppose we shall have Mr. Hayton here to-morrow, as well as the police," said Mrs. Vernon, "he is the nearest magistrate."

"And he is no friend of the natives," rejoined Edith. "He has given all his workmen instructions never to give anything to the blacks."

"I believe he considers himself a genuine philanthropist, Edie," said Harry. "He does everything upon 'principle.' He considers the natives a lazy race of men, as no doubt they are, and on principle, he will give them nothing unless they work for it."

"But he will not give those who are willing to work any employment."

"No, because, on principle, he employs white men ; they have the first claim upon him."

"Then he need not engage so many white men ; they could get work anywhere else in the colony, and the black man cannot."

"Very true ; but Mr. Hayton would be able to shew you that you are wrong, and that 'on principle' it is right to let the natives retire before the settlers.

He argues that the natives do not know what to do with the resources of their land, therefore it is better that they should give place to those who do. What he and a great many others really think is, that the native inhabitants of this country, being an inferior race of men, ought to be ready and willing to retreat to those parts of the colony where the superior race cannot live, because there is neither food or water, or any means of getting any. What becomes of them there, these philanthropists neither know or care. I asked Mr. Hayton once if he thought the natives were men or a superior kind of monkey. I put the question as if I had not quite made up my own mind on the subject and really wanted his opinion."

"Oh, Harry! how could you? What did he say?"


"Just what I expected he would; he appeared to be shocked at my ignorance, and exclaimed energetically, 'Oh, they are men undoubtedly.'"

"Then," said Isabelle, "if he admit that he must admit also that they have souls to be saved or lost."

"I said something of that kind to him, and his reply, very composedly given, was, that 'he *supposed* they had.'"

On the afternoon of the following day, two policemen arrived at Kooroona, and soon afterwards Mr. Hayton drove up to the house. Harry received him at the door, and ushered him into a room where a substantial luncheon was ready for him.

"This is an awkward and unpleasant affair for you, Mrs. Vernon. The murder having been committed within a comparatively short distance of the house makes it peculiarly unpleasant," remarked Mr. Hayton, rubbing his hands. "One of your men it appears discovered the body."



"Yes; he and two of the natives were in pursuit of a kangaroo, but for that the discovery may never have been made."

"Has the body been removed?"

"No; it has not been touched," replied Harry, "my man, very prudently, let it alone. He saw that the head was wounded, one of the coat sleeves was almost torn off, and the arm and hand bore marks of violence."

"You have the man here who found the body?"

"Yes, and the two natives; they will conduct you and the police to the spot as soon as you are ready to go. Unless the body is too much decomposed to be moved, you can hold the inquest in the wool shed, which is not far off."

"You will accompany us, Mr. Vernon?"

"Certainly."

"Then," said Mr. Hayton, rising as he spoke, "I think the sooner we proceed to business the better. You have had some of those desperate fellows from the north here, I understand," addressing Mrs. Vernon, as Harry left the room to order the horses.

"Yes, and very well they behaved; they were as inoffensive as our own tribe."

"How long is it since they left?"

"About a week."

"Then this murder must have been committed about the time they left."


"Probably since," said Mrs. Vernon, coolly. "From what Jones said the body could scarcely have been lying there so long."

"We have had remarkably cool weather—remarkably cool, during the last week, and the nights have been positively cold."

Mrs. Vernon saw at once the direction Mr. Hayton's thoughts were taking, and she felt very much annoyed, but made no reply; and soon after the party started from the house.

On arriving at the spot, the ground was examined, and it and the surrounding bushes bore evident marks of a severe struggle. The body was then turned over, and Mr. Hayton directed that it should be removed to the woolshed previous to being stripped and examined. Nothing was found on the person of the deceased to lead to his being identified, except a few links of a steel watch-chain, in the last link of which was a small knot of string. The waistcoat was unfastened, and two of the buttons, one of which was picked up in the scrub near to where the body was found, were torn off, clearly indicating that the watch-chain had been violently pulled and had given way where it had been broken and tied together. There was no money, no papers; the pockets had been rifled of their contents. The murdered man was about the middle height, dark, swarthy complexion, and black hair. There was a wound on his head, as if from the blow of a stick or some blunt instrument which had glanced off, penetrating the skin, but not causing any material injury. The cause of death was a deep wound in the throat made by a knife or other sharp instrument, and which had severed completely a large artery.

Mr. Hayton questioned and cross-questioned the shepherd and the two natives, Wahreep acting as interpreter, without eliciting anything more than the simple fact before stated, that the body was discovered by them, when in pursuit of a kangaroo. He also closely questioned Duncan and others about the northern tribes, and much to Harry's satisfaction and



inward delight, gathered no information against them, which could give even Mr. Hayton an excuse for deciding that possibly the natives had been guilty of the murder. A verdict was pronounced therefore against some person or persons unknown ; the body was ordered to be buried, and the police instructed to make all possible enquiries with a view to finding some clue to the murderer. The fragment of chain was committed to the care of one of the troopers, and Mr. Hayton returned to the house, Mrs. Vernon having asked him to remain for the night. Mrs. Brown had orders to provide accommodation for the two policemen.

Mr. Hayton was not a favourite at Kooroona. He had been an occasional visitor, perhaps once in the course of the year, since Mrs. Vernon had lived there. During shearing-time he had once or twice gone to see what crops of wool Harry was likely to have, but he was one of those men from whom Mrs. Vernon shrank instinctively. He was fidgety, pompous, and narrow-minded ; dictatorial in manner, censorious in judging others, perfectly satisfied with himself.

Koonid had been at the house all day, and whenever that happened, Muhnard's great delight appeared to be following Edith about the house or garden, listening to her playing and singing, and from time to time eating, with much satisfaction, the pieces of cake which were put into her hand. She made no noise, unless Edith chose to play with her, which, however, she often did, and she gave no one any trouble ; so she went where she liked. No one was ever surprised to find her peeping about in any out-of-the way corner, or thought any more of her being there than they would, had it been a pet spaniel.

She was sitting on the floor at Edith's feet, turning over the leaves of a picture-book, when Mr. Hayton entered the room. He smiled superciliously as he looked at the child, and as Edith noticed the expression, and her quick perception gave it its true meaning, her spirit rose and she was ready to say more in reply to any remark Mr. Hayton might make, than she otherwise would have done.

"Do you often allow black children to be in such close proximity to you, Miss Vernon?"

"Oh, dear, yes, often; as often as they choose to be. I like it; it shews that they like me."

"I think I should prefer their keeping at a greater distance."

"You contrive to do that admirably, Mr. Hayton. I mean, you manage to keep them away from you."

"Yes; I do so on principle."

"I wonder if poor little Muhnard comes and sits down by me on principle? Eh, Muhnard? I expect you do."

The child raised her bright black eyes to Edith's face, smiled, and pointed to a picture before her.

"Ah! that is a picture of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, carrying a little lamb in His arms; you know what that means."

"Me?" said the child, "black piccaninny and white piccaninny all go to heaven if they good."

"Yes; there is no difference in God's sight between white men and black men, except as they do good or evil; only white men have been taught more and so God will expect more from them."

That speech was for Mr. Hayton, though addressed to Muhnard, who, of course could not understand it, and she returned to her pictures.

"You are unfitting that child for her natural

position in the world, are you not?" enquired Mr. Hayton.

"What is that position?" said Edith, looking up.

"The one in which you found her; with all that was necessary to sustain the life it was intended she should lead. Everything suited to her capacity, habits, customs, and manners, on a level with her own nature."

"Indeed, Mr. Hayton, you are very much mistaken in your estimate of the natives. This child's father only wants teaching to make him superior to many of the white men who work for us. Mamma says so,—Harry says so; he says Wahreep is superior to them now, and he was taught nothing till he came to live near us, only he had learned to speak English because he was always good and industrious, and Mr. Graham used to encourage those who were."

"Yes; I am aware that Mr. Graham had some crotchets. I have the greatest respect for Mr. Graham," added Mr. Hayton, seeing Edith's eyes flash, and the colour spread over her face, "but he and I always differed on that subject. Wahreep did you say? That was, if I remember rightly, the name of the man who acted as interpreter."

"And a very good, clever man he is, and we all like him, and we all mean to do everything we can for him," said Edith, growing warm and excited, "and we will teach little Muhnard all we can, and make her a good, useful little woman; won't we?" pinching the child's cheek, as she spoke. "Why, what pretty thing is that? something Mrs. Brown gave you?"

Muhnard shook her head, and said something about the scrub, as she pulled away at a piece of

chain which appeared to have caught to a button within her dress."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mr. Hayton, "what is that?"

"Only part of an old steel chain," said Edith, as she helped Muhnard to extricate it.

"Allow me to look at it. It is the same; there can be no doubt of it. I must learn instantly how it came to be in that child's possession."

"What do you mean, Mr. Hayton?" enquired Edith, looking alarmed.

"The other part of the chain was attached to the murdered man's waistcoat."

Edith's face became white, and just then Harry entered the room.

"Look here, Mr. Vernon, we have a clue to the murderer."

"How did you get that?" enquired Harry, looking first at the chain, and then at Mr. Hayton and Edith.

"It was hidden within the bodice of that child's dress," replied Mr. Hayton, in a severe tone, pointing to Muhnard, who seemed to know intuitively that something was wrong, though she did not know what, and was clinging to Edith's dress.

"Why do you say *hidden*, Mr. Hayton?" said Edith, her face flushing, "as if it were concealed purposely? It is the place where she puts every little thing that is given to her which she likes."

"How did it come into her possession, Edie?" said Harry.

"I don't know; she only drew it out just as you came in."

"Ask her."

"Who gave you that, Muhnard?"

"No one give it,—I find it."

"Where did you find it?"

"In scrub, long way off."

"A clear case," said Mr. Hayton, "most important evidence. Where is the child's father now? he must be secured."

"I would answer for Wahreep's innocence as I would for my own," said Harry, indignantly. "He is in the kitchen; you need not fear his running away. Besides," and Harry smiled contemptuously, "if, as you suppose, Wahreep committed this murder, he would not have taken his child to the spot. Your dislike to the natives makes you unjust to them, Mr. Hayton. Excuse me, but Wahreep has been a faithful servant for some years. I am sure he is innocent."

"You must admit that the chain being in the child's possession is a very suspicious circumstance."

"I admit that it is very strange," replied Harry. "Who was with you, Muhnard, when you found this?"

"Koonid."

"Anyone else?"

"Yes; Caudeto with me."

"How long ago did you find it, how many days?"

Muhnard looked at her fingers, counted them, and held up three.

"She means three days," said Edith.

"I must order the police not to lose sight of the man."

"Will you see him at once? I am sure he will be able to clear himself," said Harry.

"Who is Koonid?"

"The child's mother."

"I should like to see her first; where is she to be found?"

"She is in the house, with the servants ; shall I call her ? She will be afraid to see you alone, and perhaps will not understand you as well as she does me," said Edith.

"Thank you ; that may be best. Do not tell her why she is wanted. The child must not leave the room," Mr. Hayton said, seeing that she followed Edith, who was moving towards the door.

"Come here, Muhnard," said Harry, "and shew me your pictures. You had better tell mamma what is going on," he added.

Mr. Hayton left the room to speak to the police, and came back just as Mrs. Vernon, looking anxious and annoyed, entered the room with Edith, followed by Koonid.

"I will question her, if you will allow me," said Mrs. Vernon.

Mr. Hayton assented by a pompous inclination of the head.

"Did you find this, Koonid ?" pointing to the chain as she spoke.

"No ; Muhnard find it in scrub,"

"How long ago ?"

"Three days."

"Has Wahreep seen it ?"

"Dun'no, missis."

"How many miles from here was it found ?" enquired Mr. Hayton.


Koonid looked at him, but did not speak.

"How far away did Muhnard find that ?" said Mrs. Vernon.

"Oh, long way."

"Near the woolshed ?" said Harry.

"No ; that big long way, by tree with big one hole ; you know."



"That is about a mile from here," said Harry, "not more."

Nothing further could be elicited from Koonid, and Mrs. Vernon suggested that Wahreep should be sent for and questioned at once, and that Koonid should remain in the room. She felt sure, as Harry did, that Wahreep was innocent. He came, and the chain, which was lying on the table before Mr. Hayton, instantly arrested his attention. He pointed to it, and with a look that expressed to Harry only guileless simplicity and the most unfeigned astonishment, said,—


"That same as other chain."

"It is the same; one part was found on the person of the murdered man, the other part is there," said Mr. Hayton, in a severe tone, and transfixing poor Wahreep with a look which made him instinctively glance at Harry, and draw a few steps nearer to him. "I must know how that came into your possession."

Edith was about to utter some indignant exclamation, but was checked by Mrs. Vernon. She was impatient under the restraint, and wondered how anyone could keep cool while Mr. Hayton was, as she thought, doing all he could to convict an innocent person of murder. As the thought crossed her mind she raised her eyes to her mother's face. The rebellious spirit was crushed in a moment, her indignation faded, and, even to herself, seemed as nothing compared with what she read there. She had never seen her mother look so before. Mrs. Vernon's quickness of perception was far above the average, her feelings were strong, she had a high and noble spirit, such an one as would, unrestrained and unguided, unsubmissive to an infal-

lible Teacher, inevitably lead its possessor along the broad road, from which few turn to seek a more lowly and better way; such an one as, subdued, controlled, and disciplined, will gain the victory on earth and be crowned in heaven. She saw at once the position in which Muhnard, having found the chain, might place Wahreep. She knew that Mr. Hayton was prejudiced against the natives, she fully realized that there was cause for suspicion, and that a searching investigation was necessary. She felt that Wahreep was innocent, but that he was one of a despised, neglected race, whom others were more ready to condemn than to justify, and she was grave and anxious, that was all, till Mr. Hayton put his first question in a form which previous information he had gained rendered unjustifiable; it was the powerful man oppressing the weak man; the rich man robbing the poor one of all he possessed, his good name; and as she stood erect, with her head raised, strong indignation and stern contempt stamped upon every feature of her face, she looked more like an avenging angel, than the mother Edith had always known. The tide of feeling ebbed as quickly as it rose; she was herself again, before Edith had recovered from the astonishment she felt on discovering that one who was so gentle, one who seemed to have taken for her motto, "Obedience and Humility," possessed, in an intensified degree, all her own strong feelings. Edith saw clearly for the first time what she had to do with herself, and what could be done. The lesson learned in a moment was never forgotten.

Mrs. Vernon did not speak, nor did Wahreep make any reply to Mr. Hayton's remark; in fact, he did not understand it; he saw "breakers ahead,"



but what lay hidden beneath them he could not conjecture.

"Wahreep does not understand you, Mr. Hayton," said Harry, in a cold, haughty tone. "You must use plain words, and few of them."

"From where did you get that chain?" asked Mr. Hayton.

"Me no get it."

"Have you seen it before?"

"No; seen little bit on dead white man. Where that from?" addressing Harry.


"Muhnard brought it here."

"Muhnard!" exclaimed Wahreep, with a look of amazement; and turning towards Koonid, he spoke to her in his own language.

After a brief conversation, he explained to Harry that Meenulta's lubra and Koonid went together with their children as far as a large hollow gum tree which grew on one side of the mail track through the scrub. That the two children were playing, and Muhnard ran to hide herself in the tree and found the chain there. Caudeto took it from her when they reached home and threw it among the trees. Muhnard cried, and they looked about to try to find it, but could not. The child said she saw it that morning, just before going to the house; it was lying among the thick branches of a tea tree, and she put it inside her dress, lest Caudeto should take it again.

Everyone was satisfied except Mr. Hayton. He cross-questioned Wahreep, but there was not a shade of contradiction in his short answers, and all that could be done was to search Wahreep's hut. That he proceeded to do at once. Harry and one of the troopers accompanied him. Nothing was found but some articles of clothing and furniture, which Mrs.

Vernon had given to them, and Harry was leaving the hut, looking triumphant, when a sudden exclamation from the policeman caused him to turn round. The man had raised the lantern he carried, and was taking a last look round the hut ; the light fell upon Wahreep's spear, and revealed a dark stain and some black hair adhering to it. The spear was taken down and carefully examined. The hair was human, and was the same colour as that of the murdered man, and Harry felt that unless some further discovery were made Wahreep's fate was sealed, and he would be committed to take his trial for murder. He did not for a moment believe that he was guilty ; he told Mr. Hayton so, and that he had no doubt Wahreep had had a skirmish with some man of his tribe, and would be able to clear the matter up. Wahreep could not do so. He looked at his spear with as much astonishment as he had done at the chain. He had quarrelled with no one ; the last thing he speared was a wallaby ; he had not joined any hunting party for a fortnight ; he had been working a great part of the time with Duncan. Koonid was questioned by Harry. She said it was Wahreep's spear ; that he always kept it where the policeman found it, and she did not know that it had been moved for more than two weeks. She did not see who rescued her from the northern black, for as soon as he loosed her she ran away. Harry suspected that it was Meenulta, and that he went away lest the men from the north should find out that he had wounded one of their tribe and revenge themselves upon him ; he might have used Wahreep's spear, but proof was wanted. All was conjecture, and Mr. Hayton could only act on the evidence before him. It was conclusive to his mind. Wahreep was committed, and Koonid



and the two natives who were with the shepherd when the body was found, were to accompany him to Adelaide, there to be imprisoned until the next Criminal Sittings in the Supreme Court were held.

Harry and Mrs. Vernon remonstrated ; they offered to be personally answerable for the appearance of the three witnesses, but Mr. Hayton was immovable. Harry with much difficulty restrained his indignation within reasonable bounds : " They would all be dead before June. People accustomed to a wild life to be shut up for three months in a jail in order to secure their presence as witnesses ! Why could not Mr. Hayton take down what little evidence they were able to give and leave them at liberty ? "

Mr. Hayton could do no such thing, and the order was given to the police to start with the prisoners early in the morning.

At daybreak everyone was stirring. The prisoners were hand-cuffed and chained together. Koonid was crying bitterly ; and Harry stood with his arms folded looking sternly on, while the policemen were making arrangements for starting.

" I *didn't* do it, missis," said Wahreep, looking at Mrs. Vernon wistfully.

" I know you did not ; we are all sure of it, Wahreep. Whatever happens we shall always think the same of you."

" Don't be afraid of anything," said Harry ; " I shall go to Adelaide to see after you ; you will see me before long."

An exclamation of joy and relief broke from each at that announcement.

" You will all come back again ; don't go and be frightened by anyone ; they cannot do more than shut you up for two or three months, and I will come

and see you. Where are the things, Isabelle ? The sooner they are off the better ; I can't stand those poor fellows looking at me as they do."

Just then Duncan appeared with three or four bags, in which was a plentiful supply of provisions for the journey. He was followed by Mrs. Brown, who, of her own accord, had been up half the night making bread and cake, "not one bit of which those troopers should taste, if anything she could say to the blacks would prevent it." "A change had come o'er the spirit of her dream." She believed, as firmly as others did, that Wahreep was innocent, and she did not make any distinction, when thinking of the part Mr. Hayton had taken in the matter, of the duty he had to perform in virtue of his office, and the *way* in which he had done it. It was the latter which excited the indignation of the Vernons, but it was all one to Mrs. Brown. "It was," she said, "a shameful act of injustice from beginning to end, and the troopers were just as likely to have killed the man themselves in a drunken quarrel ; perhaps Mr. Hayton did it himself for that matter ; it was more likely than that an innocent, quiet, good sort of creature like Wahreep, who never did any harm or troubled anyone, should go and kill a white man, and steal a lot of things that would be of no use to him."

"Those things are for yourselves," she said, emphatically, as she assisted in slinging the bags over their shoulders ; "you can't catch wallaby now you are tied up in that fashion. I have not provided for you gentlemen," casting a defiant glance at the policemen as she spoke ; "you are able to do that for yourselves."

The troopers only laughed, and Mrs. Brown, for her further consolation, persuaded herself that "those



poor creatures, who were being dragged to Adelaide in chains, to please a man who thought a great deal more of himself than anyone else did of him, would be robbed of every morsel of food, and what the troopers couldn't eat themselves they would give to their horses."





CHAPTER XXIV.



DAY after day passed and Meenulta did not appear. All felt sure that his sudden disappearance was connected in some way with Koonid's rescue from the northern black; his prolonged absence was unaccountable, and as time went on, they became more anxious to discover what had become of him, for they thought that he, and he only probably, could clear Wahreep, by accounting for the state in which his hunting spear had been found.

Harry waited for a month, and then went to Adelaide, much disappointed that he had been unable to gain evidence which he hoped would have been sufficient to induce the authorities to liberate the witnesses on his becoming answerable for their appearance. He found them pining for the freedom and liberty of savage life. Even the bushmen, reared in all the habits of civilized life, when they have spent a few years in Australian wilds, find restraint and confinement irksome, and prefer passing the night, as well as the day, in the open air. The wild man, whose only canopy has been the sky above him, his only shelter the trees of his own forests, cannot breath freely in the close atmosphere



which civilization has made the white man prefer, and to him imprisonment, for a lengthened period, is a punishment, the severity of which one born of ages of progressive luxury cannot estimate.

"You no help us get out of here, Mis'r Vernon?" said Koonid.

"No; I wish I could."

"We no go away; we stay in Adelaide long as they tell us."

"You must stay here, Koonid, for a few weeks longer, then you shall go back to Kooroona; my mother and sisters will be glad to see you again."

"Ah! they good to black fellow; they kind to piccaninny. You sure Wahreep go to Kooroona?"

"I hope so. I shall be here to tell them all about him."

"You know Wahreep good; he no wild black fellow; he no kill dead white man."


"I know he did not; it will all come right."

So Harry talked to them; but he was, as the time for the trial drew nearer, becoming more anxious than ever to get more substantial evidence in Wahreep's favour than his own conviction of the man's innocence. He felt that that would have little or no weight in a court of justice.

Harry was young in years, but he had been taught in his early days to think for himself. A blind belief in the opinions advanced by others; a mere assent to propositions, probable in themselves and seemingly indisputable, did not suit his intellectual capacity, or accord with the lessons he had received from his father and with the example of his mother. On the other hand, he had been guarded against the insidious attacks of modern scepticism and rationalism by the inculcation of the

only principle which effectually withstands the assaults made on the minds of men in the present age of reason. The Faith of the One Holy Catholic Church, proceeding from Baptismal grace, strengthened and sustained by those other means of grace which the Church alone has power to dispense, restrained his reason within the limits prescribed by the Wisdom of God. Faith first, reason afterwards. The command is "Hear the Church." Having heard and obeyed, the Beræans were commended for exercising the gift of reason, in searching the Scriptures and proving that the things they had previously been taught by the Church were as she stated. Those so taught and guarded are the only ones who can feel in their hearts the truth of the words, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." They can read the sacred records that have been given by God for the guidance of the Church and committed to her keeping, without denying the Faith or silencing reason; while others, who are not thus guarded by "the whole armour of God," rest in a blind belief, or stray into the labyrinth of fanaticism and infidelity, and spend life in disputing and reasoning on false premises and foregone conclusions, based upon man's theory instead of God's eternal truth.

With this safeguard, Harry Vernon had always been taught to exercise his thinking faculties, and in spite of the knowledge that older men than himself made and administered the laws which govern South Australia, in spite of the deference he paid to age,—an old-world notion which is regarded as a natural curiosity in the southern continent, and an idea that the component parts of a responsible government must consist of wiser heads than his



own,—he came to the conclusion, as he slowly walked back to the York Hotel after visiting the jail, that the trial of aborigines in the supreme court was a great farce. Before he reached the hotel he had decided that it was senseless, unjust, and positively iniquitous. He sat down in the public room, and mechanically took up a newspaper.

Seated at a table was a shrewd looking man, with a genial expression about the mouth, and a broad, benevolent brow. He was dressed in the peculiar style which a certain class in Australia has adopted more, I am inclined to think, by choice, than from indifference to personal appearance,—for it certainly does not tend to improve that,—in order to appear as unlike the self-constituted, self-styled “upper ten” as possible. Botanically speaking, they will not allow themselves to appear as varieties of that very imposing, but highly objectionable genus. The stranger’s dress was colonial in the full sense of the word, and decidedly “outré” according to colonial ideas on that subject.

“Mr. Jones, you are wanted,” said a waiter.

“I always am wanted when I don’t want to be,” replied Mr. Jones in a “staccato” style; and starting up, he crossed the room as if walking to a quick march, his steps becoming “più presto” as he neared the door. Soon he returned, and taking up a paper that he was reading when interrupted, he was speedily absorbed in the contents, occasionally breaking the silence by indulging in a hearty, though partially suppressed, laugh.

“Wooden indeed! but not half so harmless; a block is useful for some purpose or other, but these blockheads are unmitigated nuisances.”

Mr. Jones was in the habit of speaking to himself to relieve his feelings, just as a safety valve lets off superfluous steam and prevents an explosion. Harry looked up, and Mr. Jones, with a genial smile, said :

“Have you seen the last number of *Pasquin* ?”

“No ; is it an Adelaide paper ?”

“Yes, in advance of the age, as the editor acknowledges. I do not suppose for a moment that those, whose ignorance he is exposing in his own peculiarly felicitous style, are capable of understanding his satire, consequently they will not profit by it. But for one thing, I should recommend you to read *Pasquin*, if you think of becoming a member of our honourable House of Assembly at some future time.”

“Thank you, I do not aspire to that honour. What is the one thing against *Pasquin* ? He seems to be an amusing writer,” Harry said, as he turned over the leaves.

“Highly amusing, and very clever. The one thing I have against him is the way in which he travesties the Holy Scriptures. He mars his usefulness by his profanity. I admire his cleverness and his sparkling wit and true genius too much not to regret the dark spot which mars all the rest when it appears.”

“From the remarks you have made, I suppose reading *Pasquin* would confirm and strengthen my own ideas, which are becoming, on one subject at any rate, less vague every day.”

“May I ask what that is ?”

“The subject I have in my mind at this moment,” said Harry, “is the treatment of the aborigines, from which I deduce the plain fact that South Australian

legislators are great muffs, if not something considerably worse."

"You have arrived at a perfectly correct conclusion; but, my friend, *Pasquin* would tell you that your mildly descriptive language is quite out of character when speaking on this subject. He finds the phraseology of his vernacular tongue totally inadequate; it produces no impression on the wooden heads at which he is aiming, and he therefore addresses the unfortunate owners of those impenetrable craniums in the strongest Arabic. I am afraid all his rhetoric is being wasted."

Harry felt much amused at the remarks of his new acquaintance, and smiled as he turned over the leaves of the paper, which Mr. Jones had handed to him.

"Does *Pasquin* advocate the cause of the aborigines?" he enquired.

"No, I do not think he has touched upon that subject; when he does he will be sure to condemn any injustice done to them in his own way. Young men," continued Mr. Jones, looking enquiringly at Harry, "don't, as a general rule, take much interest in these poor creatures."

"Perhaps not, but I do; and just now there is as good and trustworthy a fellow as ever lived in jail. He was committed to take his trial for murder a month ago,—a murder of which he is as innocent as you are. Two other poor fellows and the man's lubra are imprisoned also."

"Witnesses, I suppose?" said Mr. Jones, drily.

"Yes; and the men cannot speak half-a-dozen words of English, and the woman will understand very little of any questions that will be asked; so that all the information they will get will be from

the one being tried for murder, who will have to act as interpreter, for I understand your Protectors and Sub-Protectors of Aborigines know nothing of the native language."

"Certainly not. All government officers in this province know nothing that they ought to know."

"But surely," said Harry, "a man would not be condemned on evidence gained in such an unsatisfactory manner, however clear it may seem to be."

"It is impossible to say what will be done here, my young friend. We never know what is likely to happen from day to day, or what extraordinary phenomena may issue from those mysterious regions known to the world as the Government Offices. One year statistics proved that we had such an enormous revenue that no one knew what to do with it, and forthwith the erection of public buildings was commenced regardless of cost, and money was squandered in the most reckless manner. While our rulers were thus proving themselves to be, as many thought, hopelessly insane, they gave evidence that at brief intervals the voice of reason made itself heard, or that there was, at any rate, method in their madness, by voting fifty thousand pounds to build a new lunatic asylum. I, in common with a few others, regard that as a very selfish expenditure of the public money, because it was evident that they were only acting for their own benefit, and providing comfortable quarters for themselves at some future time. However, we are used to these things."

"And after all these public buildings are paid for, how much will be left of your surplus revenue?" said Harry.

Mr. Jones shrugged his shoulders, as he replied,—

"Nothing. In fact they have since borrowed money from England to enable them to complete their public works. Of course fresh taxes must be levied to pay the interest."

"I do not understand how that surplus revenue was accumulated."

"By a very simple process. The waste lands were offered for sale, the upset price being a pound an acre. Government placed the money in the banks, and they advanced it to the land-sharks and others to purchase more land, which again filled the Government coffers, and again the contents were poured into the banks to be lent to other purchasers of land. That little drama was acted over and over again until almost all the inhabitants of this prosperous colony found themselves, to their utter astonishment, in a state bordering upon insolvency, their eyes were opened, their money was gone, and a paternal government had it in safe keeping. I hope the lesson, and a very hard one it was in some cases, will benefit them, and make them understand that men whose range of thought has been limited to what concerned themselves and the occupation to which they were fitted by birth, taste, and education, are not exactly the best persons to govern a country."

"On the whole South Australia appears to be in a very satisfactory state," said Harry.

"Remarkably satisfactory," replied Mr. Jones. "I used to worry myself about these things, but during a twenty years residence in this colony, I have become so accustomed to its course of legislation, that I regard everything now with stoical indifference."

"Indeed! I should have thought just the reverse."

"Only my manner, only my manner. I have ceased to be surprised at anything, and expect nothing, and when a man arrives at that point, he may be said to have crossed the rubicon. You see, my young friend, the wisdom of the ancients decided that a silk purse cannot be made out of a sow's ear, and basing my argument on that hypothesis, I contend that we get all we ought to expect. It takes something more than the education that fits a man to stand behind a counter, and a different course of study to that which is necessarily pursued by one who occupies that position, to make a wise legislator. If we raise our expectations, look for more than could flow from such a source, and do not find it, the fault is our own. I freely confess that I deserve all the disappointment I have met with, and you will do so too if you expect full justice and impartiality in any department."

"Was there not," said Harry, "a Select Committee of the Legislative Council appointed some time ago to enquire into the utility of trying native prisoners in the Supreme Court?"

"Yes; and the most conclusive evidence was given showing that neither the natives or the settlers were benefitted by such proceedings; that the public funds were uselessly expended, unnecessary labour imposed on the police, and the time of the court wasted, by bringing aboriginal offenders hundreds of miles to be tried by British law, the formalities and technicalities of which are entirely thrown away on men who do not comprehend a particle of them, and which, therefore, in the great majority of cases, allows the offenders to escape. Besides, neither judge, jury, nor counsel can make

anything of the natives in nine cases out of ten. I used to make a point of going to the court when any aborigines were to be tried, but it is such a mockery of the administration of justice that I have for many years stayed away. I remember one case where, though the charge was of a grave character, there was not the slightest evidence in support of it. The attorney acting for the defence, first pointed out that there was a difficulty in the matter, as he could not make the prisoner understand anything, and there was no interpreter. Then the judge after looking through the depositions, suggested that counsel for the prisoner should, without reference to his client, enter a plea of guilty of a common assault. That was accordingly done, and the judge then sentenced blackey to one month's imprisonment, but said that if in the meantime the police could find means of conveying the prisoner back, he should be given up to them."

"And that," said Harry, "is a fair example of the mode in which aboriginal offenders are dealt with. South Australia may be proud of her courts of justice?"

"I believe she is; everybody here is perfectly satisfied with himself, and would vote anyone, who ventured to suggest that there was room for improvement in various departments, a fool and a bore. I presume the members of the Select Committee whose enquiries on this subject elicited evidence which ought to have caused some alteration to be made, were regarded in that light, for the practice they so fully condemned is still persisted in. What is the nature of the case in which you are now specially interested?"

Harry gave the particulars of the case, and Mr.

Jones listened with evident interest and grave seriousness.

"Of course," Harry said, "Wahreep will be prosecuted by the Crown Solicitor—"

"Who, not being an aboriginal linguist, will conduct the prosecution in a manner peculiarly satisfactory to all parties concerned," remarked Mr. Jones.

"Wahreep knows English pretty well. I intend, however, to see an attorney, and hear what he says before I return to Kooroona."

"Take an old colonist's advice," said Mr. Jones, "and have as little as possible to do with the lawyers. Use every possible means to find the man whom you believe to have used the hunting spear when the woman was rescued, and leave your poor black friend in the hands of the judge. The whole system is bad, and the lawyers, in a small community like this, are so well known to each other, connected by the ties of relationship or friendship, or they are so rancorously opposed to each other on account of some private quarrel, that to have anything to do with them is dangerous; it is like playing with edged tools. It is impossible to say how far your speaking to any one of them may exercise an influence for or against your case."

"I was anxious to have a legal opinion as to what would be the probable sentence, if we cannot get further evidence; but after what you have said, I think I shall wait."

"You will act wisely in doing so; but that is only the opinion of a stranger."

Harry looked at the open, straightforward countenance before him, the eye that met his own with

an unswerving glance of sincerity and fearless truth, and replied with a smile,—

“I shall be guided by it, nevertheless.”

“I presume you have not been long in the colony,” said Mr. Jones.

“More than five years.”

“Long enough to have shaken your faith in man. You are a natural curiosity, sir.”

Harry laughed, and then said, gravely,—

“My faith is very materially shaken in the administration of justice in this colony.”

“I have had no faith in it to be shaken for a long time. My friend here,” and Mr. Jones laid his hand on the number of *Pasquin*, which was lying on the table, “my friend here, says that everything in South Australia is repugnant, invalid, and illegal, and he is about right. To take but one instance, could a worse substitute be found for that old English institution, the grand jury, than has been adopted here?”

“I don’t suppose that Englishmen in general would consider the attorney-general a good substitute, however clever he may be,” replied Harry.

“I wonder sometimes how it is that such an arrangement is tolerated even in South Australia. The office is not considered incompatible with the private practice of his profession, consequently the defence of a prisoner is frequently conducted by the partner of one who has the power to ignore the bill of indictment. There are very few men, perhaps none, who can entirely set aside all personal feelings. All are more or less liable to be influenced by private friendships, and in a place where the population is so small as it is here, it is especially necessary to guard against the possibility

of such feelings being brought to bear on the official acts of government officers; but I must be going."


"I hope we shall meet again," said Harry, frankly extending his hand.

"It will give me pleasure to see you at any time," replied Mr. Jones, giving Harry's hand a hearty shake, "and we may cross each other's path again, but not at present. To-morrow I am off to Sidney on a long promised visit to a sister, and it is uncertain how long I remain there. I shall look out for the account of your trial with interest, and hope sincerely it may terminate favourably."





CHAPTER XXV.

“AMMA, there is Harry!” exclaimed Edith, who was standing at one of the drawing-room windows, carelessly humming an air from “Norma.” The sun was nearing the horizon, and a cold south-west wind made the trees bend before it. It almost amounted to a hurricane, but Edith threw open the window, flew through the garden, and was struggling with the gate, which the wind almost prevented her opening, before Harry reached it.

“Oh, Harry! I am so glad.”

“Hallo, Edie! How are you all?” were the first words that passed, and then a warm, hearty kiss was exchanged.

“What is this?” said Harry, taking hold of a long tress of black hair, which the wind had carried round his neck.

“Harry! you will pull my head off.”

“Wouldn’t do that on any account; it is the prettiest thing of the kind I have seen lately. It is a pleasure to see the wind tearing away at your hair without producing any effect beyond what is natural.”

"You think I look like 'Crazy Jane.' I dare say I do," said Edith, laughing; "I never thought of my hat."

"No, Edie, 'Crazy Jane' did not enter my head. Your hair blowing about in that fashion reminded me of a catastrophe I witnessed one day in Adelaide."

They were at the house.

"Why, mamma, you seem as glad to see me as if I had been away a year. Where is Isa?"

Just then the door opened. Harry had entered by the window, and as Isabelle came into the room, he stepped back and stood behind the door, close to which he was standing.

"Edie!" exclaimed Isabelle, as she caught sight of her sister, "you have been flying about in this cold, piercing wind, and made yourself look like the spirit of the storm."

She had scarcely spoken when she felt an arm round her, and heard Harry's voice, saying,—

"You ought to have spoken to me first."

"Well," said Harry, looking round, a few hours later, as they all sat by a bright wood fire, "it is worth while to go from home; it seems as though I did not know before what a pleasant place it is. Besides you are so glad to see me back, that I shall henceforth think no end of myself: it is gratifying to a fellow to find that he is appreciated as he deserves to be."

"Don't be conceited, Harry," said Edith. "I shall begin to think that your visit to Adelaide has done you no good."

"Yes it has; it has enlarged my understanding and produced some indelible impressions, besides enabling me to institute some important compari-

sons between nature and art. Instead of this sort of arrangement," taking hold of one of Isabelle's long curls, which were drawn back and tied loosely together behind with some blue ribbon, "every one in Adelaide is wearing those abominable chignons. If they were not so hideous, it would be amusing to study the various shapes of the things. Such a scene I witnessed one day at the corner of King William Street!"

"Oh, Harry!" said Edith, "you said something about a catastrophe that my hair blowing about reminded you of. Was there a chignon in the case?"

"Yes. Just such another gale as is blowing to-day was carrying everything before it, and as a fashionable young lady emerged from Hindley Street, and was making desperate efforts to round the corner, the wind loosened the rigging—"

"The hair pins you mean, Harry."

"Well, whatever machinery is used for attaching those things to the back of the head, and away went the chignon."

"What did you do?"

"Turned an enquiring gaze at the young lady's back hair, which was left like 'the last rose of summer.'"

"You ought not to have done that," said Isabelle, "it would make her feel uncomfortable."

"Not at all. Do you think colonial girls are like you. That one only exclaimed, 'Oh, my chignon!' The loss of that was her first thought; her second probably was the desolate appearance of the foundation on which the hideous erection had been insecurely fastened."

"Did you recover the chignon for her?"

"No; I believe I was weak enough to meditate

rushing after the thing, but the wind carried it out of sight, or rather beyond my reach in a moment, so I moved on, wondering, as I did so, if the young lady's mind were furnished to match what I had seen."

"I am afraid you are growing rather severe, Harry," said Mrs. Vernon.

"I fancy my thoughts often flow in the channel you have marked out, mamma. I believe we generally row in the same boat, only your oars are polished and mine are in the rough. In order to make up for lost time, I intend, when we are living in the world, to study everything and everybody critically. So you all like the idea of the cottage at Morton?"

"Yes; from your description it is just the thing I had thought would suit us; it is not too far from Adelaide for you, and we shall like being among the hills."

"Morton is the only place I have seen which bears any resemblance to an English village; all the other places near Adelaide are like second or third-rate London suburbs. I promised the landlord a definite answer next week."

"Then you must write to-night, Harry."

"And say you will take it?"

"Yes; but only for a year. Everything is so uncertain that I should prefer paying a higher rent for that time than a lower one on a lease for a lengthened period."

"I thought you would decide on that plan."

"Are there many nice houses in the neighbourhood?"

"Yes, many very pretty-looking places, beautifully situated in the midst of gardens and vine-

yards; hills form the background, and in front there is a nicely wooded country, and the sea beyond; but what you will like best of all, I expect, will be living very near to the prettiest little church I have seen since we left England. It is very plain, but struck me as being built in good taste. There are some magnificent oleanders growing in the churchyard."

"It will be a treat to be within reach of a church once more. I suppose you heard nothing about the clergyman?"

"I heard one remark and only one, and that was in the omnibus as I rode back to town."

"Favourable or otherwise?"

"Judge for yourself; there was so much more in it than is to be found in a single remark, as a general rule, that I, for once in my life, adopted Captain Cuttle's plan, and made a note of it for your special benefit."

Harry took out his pocket-book and read from it.

"He is a good, kind-hearted man, and a gentleman; and though he does not please everyone, I don't believe he has an enemy in the world."

"How curious, that that should be said and no more!"

"I dare say there would have been more said, but just then one of the horses became unruly, and the next remark was on a very different subject, and of a highly interesting nature."


"Now, Harry," said Isabelle, "you do not mean what you say. I know you do not by that wicked look. What was it?"

"Precisely what might have been expected, I presume, from such a quarter. A woman got into the omnibus at the 'Morton Arms,' and brought

with her a baby, two other small children, two baskets, a live goose was in one of them, a large bundle of some sort, a young pig tied up in a bag, and the inevitable band-box, which was not to be crushed on any account. Whether the cackling of the goose, or the squeaking of the pig, startled the horse I am not prepared to say, but the result was that two of the wheels got into a deep rut, and in the general confusion that ensued, the band-box came to grief, one of the children came down on the top of the unhappy pig, who forthwith commenced squeaking more vigorously than ever, the baby began to cry, and the woman to scream, and, for the life of me, I could not help laughing, whereupon the woman became irate, and looked daggers at me."

"Did she say anything?" asked Edith.

"Yes; she told me that 'I ought to be ashamed of myself for laughing at other people's troubles, and that when I had three blessed children, besides other things, to take about with me, to be half killed by those horses as wasn't fit to draw a 'bus, I should find it was no laughing matter.' When I agreed with her she was more indignant than before, and told me 'I ought to thank my stars that I had no such troubles.' I do, ma'am, I said, as seriously as I could; upon which she opened upon me such a volley of small shot, that a young man in a seedy black coat and white choker, whom I took to be a methodist preacher, considered it desirable to improve the occasion, and began, 'my good woman, the young gentleman meant no harm;' he could get no farther. 'Gentleman, indeed! was them the manners of a gentleman, or even of a man, to laugh at a poor child being thrown down on his head?'



‘Well, well, reprove in the spirit of meekness, subdue angry passions,’ said my champion. Her attention was immediately diverted. ‘Angry passions, sir! what do you mean? I’m not angry. How dare you call an unoffending woman, as hasn’t got her husband with her to protect her, by such names as them?’ ‘I called you no names, my good woman.’ ‘Don’t good woman me, sir. I say you did, and you a preacher by your looks.’ It was rare fun.”

“How did it end?”

“The woman’s talking did not come to an end, so far as I know. She kept on till we reached Adelaide, though no one took any notice of her, and I left her arguing with the driver about her fare. She said he had no right, if he had the conscience, to charge for ‘children in arms’ as her’s might be called. I left them at it. That woman’s tongue put me in mind of the ‘cork leg.’”

Harry rose, saying he would write the note, and then go to bed, for he was tired from driving in such a furious gale. It was soon done, and consigned to the care of Mrs. Brown, who undertook to see that the mail-carrier was met the next morning.

“By the bye,” said Harry, as the door closed on Mrs. Brown, “you would not know the York Hotel.”

“Altered for better or worse?”

“For the better, infinitely. There is no absurd show or pretension about the place,—no humbug; but it is a really good, handsome building. The rooms are well furnished, and all the arrangements excellent, as far as I am able to judge. I happened to hear a lady who was staying in the house remark

that she had seldom met with such nice accommodation, or had seen such a well-conducted hotel, even in England."

"That was saying a great deal in its favour," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Not too much," replied Harry. "I think you had better go there for a week or two, and let Mrs. Brown have the felicity of putting things straight at Morton. I hate a rumpus."

Mrs. Vernon smiled. "All men do," she said.

"Except," Edith put in, "what they make themselves."

"We have one piece of bad news for you, Harry," said Mrs. Vernon, as they lingered for a few moments round the fire before separating for the night. "I did not like to spoil our first evening by telling you before. Meenulta is dead."

"Dead! When did he die? Has anyone seen him,—Duncan, or anyone else, I mean, who could learn from him if he used Wahreep's spear that day?"

"No, for he died within a fortnight after leaving here. He joined a party of men of the Kooroona tribe just then starting on one of their long excursions, met with an accident while hunting, and subsequently died. The others pursued their journey, and no news reached us of Meenulta's death until the day before yesterday, when some of the men returned."

"Have they been closely questioned? Are you sure Meenulta said nothing about wounding one of the northern tribe?"

"Not a word. I have seen his cousin who was with him till he died, and he says Meenulta did not allude to anything of the kind."

"There goes my last hope for Wahreep," said Harry; "there is nothing more to be done."

"Your last hope!" said Isabelle. "Do you mean that he will be hung?"

"I suppose he will be, if he be found guilty, and the evidence is very strong against him,—as clear as circumstantial evidence ever is."

"I don't care how strong the evidence is, I shall never believe that he had anything to do with murdering that man," said Edith.

"Nor I; but our belief will not clear the poor fellow."

"And Koonid will have to come back without him," said Isabelle. "What is to be done with her? You remember, mamma, how miserable she was when Alfred died; she thinks of things just the same as we do."

"I cannot see, at present, what is to be done," replied Mrs. Vernon, "but I shall not give up all hope yet. I am sure Warheep is innocent, and even at the last he may be proved to be so, though we cannot now see what evidence can be educed in his favour. Have you forgotten, dear, what you read to me last evening?"

"Do you mean what the 'voice of the thunder' said to Evangeline?"

"Yes; it told her that 'God was in heaven, and governed the world He created!' Let us bear that in mind, and trust to the 'justice of heaven.'"





CHAPTER XXVI.



HE June mail arrived, but brought no letter from Mr. or Mrs. Graham, and Harry was becoming impatient at being detained in the north. He was anxious to be employed, and wanted to be in Adelaide that he might occasionally visit his black friends. Mrs. Vernon tried to persuade him to go, and leave them to follow him as soon as she felt herself at liberty to make the move ; but that he would not consent to do until after the arrival of the next mail.

July came and terminated their suspense. The Grahams were travelling when Mrs. Vernon's letter reached England, and they did not receive it until it was too late to answer by the return mail. Mr. Graham wrote to one or two influential men in Adelaide, and told Harry to leave Kooroona to the care of the elder Duncan, and lose no time in making such arrangements as would forward his own interests, while Mrs. Graham blamed Mrs. Vernon for waiting to hear from her.

"I knew she would," said Isabelle.

"So did I," replied Mrs. Vernon ; "but it was right to do as we have done. We will go now as soon as the weather is a little more settled."

"Ah ! we had better not start till we see what the

dense clouds which shew themselves every evening will do. Any particular news about anybody ?" enquired Harry, as he laid down Mr. Graham's note.

"No ; mine contains nothing this month but pleasant sketches of home life."

"Then I will defer reading them till evening, and ride off at once to old Duncan to let him know that he will soon have to change his quarters, and consult with him as to who had better take his place."

A fortnight elapsed before all that Mrs. Vernon thought necessary to be arranged could be brought into working order, for she felt that they were leaving Kooroona not to return. She had not embodied her thoughts and feelings in words, because she considered it better to leave Harry's mind free from any impression that might exercise an indirect influence over him.

On Sunday afternoon, the last, as Mrs. Vernon thought, she would spend at Kooroona, she was alone. Harry had gone with his sisters to take a farewell view of a favourite glade in the forest, and Mrs. Vernon, finding that her thoughts were too busy with the past to enable her to fix her attention on the book she held in her hand, laid it aside.

However distasteful in some respects a residence in a foreign land may be, however objectionable particular localities may prove, either from an absence of congenial society or objects of natural beauty and interest, the spot that has been our *home* has often a charm in our eyes when we are leaving it which it never possessed before. Then we remember little acts of kindness, evidences of grateful recollection on the part of others of deeds we had ourselves forgotten till reminded of them. They rise before us and fall like sunshine on that one of memory's many

cells where they had been stored, and give an interest to the spot connected with such records of the better feelings of our nature.

Some such reflections were stealing over Mrs. Vernon, when her attention was arrested by a party of natives approaching the house, and carrying what appeared to her to be the lifeless body of a young Englishman. Before she had time to leave the room Mrs. Brown unceremoniously rushed in, exclaiming, "They are bringing another murdered man to the house, ma'am, and some one will make it out that we killed him. Shall I go and tell them to take him back to where they found him, and let those troopers find him again if they can?"

"No, that cannot be done," replied Mrs. Vernon, and as she spoke she left the room, followed by Mrs. Brown.

"Surely, ma'am, you won't let them bring a dead man into the house; he might have killed himself for all we know."

Mrs. Vernon opened the hall door, just as the men laid their burden gently down under the verandah.

"We find him in scrub," said one of them; "not long way off,—'bout three mile,—he no dead, missis."

Mrs. Vernon stooped down, and placed her fingers on the wrist of him, who looked so lifeless that she almost doubted the truth of what had just been said. She felt a distinct, though feeble pulsation, and as she turned her head to look at the face, the eyelids partly opened, and there was an attempt made to speak.

"Him come right," said the man who had before spoken; "you make him warm, and get him tucker."

Mrs. Vernon had seen that still face before ; where, she did not know.

"Bring him in," she said, leading the way to the room she had just left. A sofa was quickly drawn up near the fire and the stranger laid upon it. "Some hot water and the brandy immediately, and then prepare the bed in the spare room as quickly as possible. If Duncan is not in the house let some one be sent to look for him ; he will be wanted."

Mrs. Brown being relieved of her fears, was prompt in rendering assistance, and Duncan having been found, the stranger was in bed and manifesting some faint signs of returning strength and consciousness, when Harry and his sisters came back from their walk. Nothing more could be gathered from the natives, than what they had stated in a few words when Mrs. Vernon met them at the door ; for any farther information they must wait. Harry undertook to sit up and administer what Mrs. Vernon thought right ; but it seemed very doubtful, when at twelve o'clock, she insisted upon the rest of the family going to bed, if the stranger would be alive the next morning.

"I cannot think where I have seen that face before," said Mrs. Vernon, "but I am quite sure I have seen it, or one like it. The moment my eyes rested upon it, in spite of the scene before me, my thoughts reverted to home."

"How strange !" exclaimed Isabelle ; "it must be the same—I am sure of it. I wondered if it could be, when Harry was describing him."

"Wondered if it were who ?" said Harry, looking very much astonished.

"Why, the stranger we met in the forest—he who saved me from the snake. Don't you remember,

mamma, saying then that he reminded you of some one you had seen before ?”

“I believe you are right, Isa. I do remember that now, and though the remark has been forgotten till you reminded me of it, I have never forgotten what I owed to him—that has been remembered often. It is very strange that after a lapse of years we should meet again under circumstances which enable me to repay, in some measure, a deep debt of gratitude.”

“Will this make any difference in your arrangements ?” Harry asked.

“Yes, certainly, if he recover ; otherwise it will make none, at least not more than a day or so.”

“I hope he will not die,” said Isabelle. “I know it can make no difference, no *real* difference I mean, where we are buried ; but still it does seem very sad to die among strangers, and be buried anywhere but in consecrated ground.”

“In ‘God’s Acre,’ as our Saxon forefathers called it,” rejoined Mrs. Vernon, “‘the place where human harvests grow!’”

“Yes, that is what Longfellow says ; and Keble speaks of sleeping ‘within the Church’s shade.’”

“Ah ! it is pleasant to think of resting there, when our work on earth is done ; but the shadow of the Cross falls upon a lonely Australian grave as well as on those in an English churchyard.”

“You are talking as if he were certain to die,” said Harry, “and forget the old adage, ‘Where there is life there is hope.’ You had better all go to bed at once, and Mrs. Brown and I will do all we can to bring him round. I am off to my post. Good night.”

Arthur Percy, for it was he, rallied during the

night, and towards morning Harry heard the words,—

“Where am I?”

Turning quickly round, he saw the stranger's eyes fixed upon him; he rose, and bending over him, replied,—

“At Kooroona. You will do now.”

“Thank you.”

No more was said.

During breakfast it was decided that as there were yet five days of July the journey should be postponed for a week. Arthur appeared to be sleeping nearly the whole of Monday, and sometimes his careful nurses had difficulty in rousing him to take necessary nourishment, which he swallowed mechanically, almost unconsciously. Once or twice in the course of the day there was a murmured ‘thank you,’ but that, since the first question had been asked, was the only sign of recognition given. The pulse was, however, perceptibly stronger, and on Monday night Harry relinquished the post of watcher to Duncan. The worst was over, youth and a strong constitution asserted their power, and when Harry entered the patient's room, on Tuesday morning, he was greeted with a smile.

“You are better,” he said, gladly, taking the hand that was stretched out towards him.

“Yes; I shall soon be myself again.”

“How long have you been alone?”

“Not long. I have had a first-rate night; that is, I should have had, as far as sleeping is concerned, if that good fellow who has been sitting up with me, had not awaked me to pour something down my throat every now and then. He looked so sleepy, when I opened my eyes of my own accord,

just as the sun shone into the room, that I made him go."

Harry felt amused, though he did not say so, at the idea of the powerless being before him, making another do anything.

"Who have I to thank for saving my life?" enquired Arthur, after a pause.

"The natives, who brought you here."

"And since?"

"My name is Harry Vernon."

"An Englishman, I am sure?"

"Yes," said Harry, smiling and drawing himself up, "I am happy to say that I am. I should be very sorry to be anything else."

"You seem to be as proud of your native land as I am. My name is Arthur Percy."

"You have talked enough now," said Harry, who perceived a slight change come over Arthur's face; "the next thing for you to do, is to go in for a good breakfast and then keep quiet. I will come and talk to you again presently."

In the course of the day Harry learned that Arthur was on his way from a distant part of the colony to Koonappa, when, on entering an open part of the scrub about ten miles north of Kooroona, his horse took fright. Arthur believed that it was bitten by a large snake, as it lay coiled up among the dead leaves and branches of trees, and on which the horse probably trod, for he saw one rise, as the horse suddenly reared, swerved to the right, and galloped off at full speed. Had he kept on the track the accident, so far as Arthur was concerned, would have been of little consequence. He might have lost his horse, but that would have been all; as it was the maddened animal darted into the scrub, and pursued

his way through the bushes, until Arthur knew not where he was or in what direction he had been carried. His career was suddenly stopped by his head coming in contact with the branch of a tree. He was stunned, fell from his horse, and when he recovered consciousness the stars were shining above him. He made an effort to rise, but felt faint and giddy, and had to lie down again, well pleased however to know that no bones were broken. Some brandy, which he fortunately had in a flask, revived him, and as soon as it was light he looked round. He thought that his best chance to find the road was to try to trace his horse's track through the scrub. He succeeded in doing so for a short distance and then lost it; wandered about all day; lay down during the night, and resumed his wandering the next day with no better success. His situation became serious. He was without food or water, and felt his strength failing, his head still aching from the blow it had received. A third night he lay down to rest, and when the sun rose he made a last effort to get out of the dense scrub by which he was surrounded. At noon his strength was exhausted and he lay down, as he believed, to die. On the fourth day a hunting party found him and carried him to Kooroona.

Thursday came, and in consequence of Harry's report, Mrs. Vernon, who had not seen Arthur since all dangerous symptoms had disappeared, sent a message to him requesting him, if he felt able, to join them in the drawing-room.

"To tell the truth, I was meditating a move of some kind this morning. I thought, after I saw you ride off, that I would take a turn on the verandah, if I could do no more, but a general survey of my

habiliments, convinced me that until something has been done, I had better remain where I am."

"What," said Harry, laughing, "did you bring less out of the scrub than you took in?"

"Left a part of everything I had on, except my boots, hanging to the trees; my hat went altogether."

"I think we are about the same height and size," said Harry, measuring Arthur with his eyes. "You are a trifle broader, perhaps, when in good condition, but I think I can manage to equip you in some fashion; make you presentable at any rate."

It was a pleasant home scene that met Arthur's eyes as Harry threw open the drawing-room door; a blazing wood fire on the low hearth, a bright lamp on a table, at which were seated Mrs. Vernon and Edith, hard at work on some woollen dresses which were intended as parting gifts to some little black children. Isabelle was reading aloud, but rose from her chair, as Mrs. Vernon advanced to meet Arthur, and moved an easy lounging chair nearer to the fire.

"Ah! that is about the right sort of thing for an invalid," said Harry. "Take this seat, Mr. Percy."

"I will when you have introduced me to one whose kindness led her to think of placing it there for a stranger."

"We have met before, Mr. Percy," said Isabelle, raising her eyes, and looking frankly in Arthur's face. "You may have forgotten the circumstance, but I have not, nor has mamma."

"No, indeed," rejoined Mrs. Vernon; "and I am pleased that Isabelle should be the first to remind you of it."

"Miss Vernon could not remind me of what has never been forgotten. That meeting has always been

as fresh in my memory as if it had occurred yesterday."

Arthur sat down as he spoke. He felt that he had been standing long enough,

"That is a more sensible move," said Harry, "than standing to make polite speeches. I believe you would have given me the trouble of picking you up in another minute."

"I am not particularly strong yet, I find," was the reply.

"No, I expect you look like the ghost of your former self—the shadow of Don Quixote. I should not have thought you would have recognised Mr. Percy, Isa."

"Why not?" said Isabelle.

"Because, phrenologically speaking, you are lamentably deficient; one particular organ is entirely undeveloped, if you possess it at all."

Isabelle smiled. "But, Harry, you know I never forget one whom I care to remember,—one I ought not to forget."

"I feel more honoured than I deserve, Miss Vernon, by that last remark," said Arthur seriously.

"No one else thinks so," replied Harry. "I could not afford to lose one of my sisters, and you saved the one who gives me the least trouble; the other—" he stopped, and looked mischievously at Edith.

"Go on, Harry, finish the sentence; you always speak highly of me."

"No; generally the reverse. I think one thing and say another."

"That is a satisfactory explanation to me, but what will Isa say to it?"

"Of course she will receive the announcement 'cum grano salis.'"

"As I did the first," said Edith. "'Ca va sans dire.' I believe we fully appreciate each other's sentiments."

"You two are incorrigible," said Mrs. Vernon. "Those who do not know you would think you were on the verge of quarrelling."

"A little friendly skirmishing does us both good," said Harry; "besides, I enjoy a cannonade from Edith's light artillery; she strikes home without doing any damage, and helps to keep one alive."

"You are more fortunate than I am," said Arthur. "I never had a sister."

"I am sorry for you," replied Harry.

The words were lightly spoken, but so evidently in earnest that Isabelle and Edith both laughed.

"I don't consider it any laughing matter," said Harry. "It seems to me that having two sisters entails a great responsibility upon a fellow, however agreeable it may be."

"One which I should be very glad to have," rejoined Arthur.

"'Cela dépend.' Shakespeare was a wise man, and you know what he said about bearing the 'ills we have.'"

"Now, Harry!" said Edith, throwing down her work, "you shall not talk any more nonsense; turn your attention to something more profitable, better suited to your age and mine."

Her merry glance belied the words she uttered, as she rose and walked across the room. Returning with a book in her hand, she drew a small table close to Arthur's chair, and placing the book upon it, said, "If you like to look at photographs, Mr. Percy, you will find some nice ones there."

"Of England, or of English people?"

"Both. We like to look at the faces best, but you will be more pleased with the views of Westminster Abbey and other old churches."

"Ah!" said Arthur, eagerly, "some views of Oxford—the place I like best in the world; and there is old Oriel! I was a graduate there."

"A lover of Oxford would find few charms in Australia, I should think," Mrs. Vernon remarked.

"None," replied Arthur. "Circumstances over which I had no control led to my coming to Australia and have kept me here. I could leave, of course, but to return to what I left I will not."

Arthur forgot for a moment that he was speaking to those who were strangers to him and to his history. He recollected himself immediately, and wondered how it happened that he had so forgotten himself. The reason was a very simple one though he failed to perceive it,—he was at home among those in whose society an accident had thrown him. Mrs. Vernon looked at him and saw instantly that he had said more than he intended, and with ready tact, she remarked,—

"I never think of the old churches in England without comparing them with the few I have seen here. To me there is a great charm in antiquity; but setting that aside, I read in the different structures proofs of two distinct orders of mind, the one commonplace, business-like, utilitarian; the other, high, noble, unselfish, and humbly reverential."

"I believe such thoughts have occasionally flitted through my mind," said Arthur; "at least, the idea has occurred to me that the men who built England's old churches lived for something higher and better than they believed themselves to be, though we, judging them by their works, regard them as saints,

while the churches here seem to say, our builders are men of the world, who gave to a few earnest-minded persons who thought we ought to occupy a place somewhere, a few guineas out of thousands, with the conviction that everything spent on what was not absolutely essential was a useless and unprofitable expenditure."

"How plain it is," said Mrs. Vernon, "that you have not always been in Australia. We have lived so entirely in the bush since we came here, that we have retained all our old-world notions, learning those of the inhabitants of this colony from the newspapers."


"The revelations of those journals have not made a favourable impression, if I may hazard an opinion from the little you have said."

"No; life here seems to be a scramble after money, place, and power. No one seems to have a higher object, and I have sometimes thought that the means employed by the majority to attain the accomplishment of their wishes are very unscrupulous."

Arthur smiled, as he thought of his experience, and the knowledge he had gained on Grant's Peninsula, and replied,—“Your opinion on that subject, Mrs. Vernon, accords with my own, though it appears that it is based upon knowledge drawn from a different source. You judge from reading the public journals, I from mixing with the people, hearing and seeing them. You have lost nothing and gained much by living in the country.”

“Harry has probably mentioned to you that we are about moving to the neighbourhood of Adelaide?”

“Yes, I told Mr. Percy we are going next week,” said Harry. “I shall like a change very well. It is no use staying here now.”



"Not the slightest. I shall go on to Koonappa, as soon as I am able, and wind up there."

"Finally, do you mean?" enquired Harry.

"Yes; of course I shall lose by giving up the run now, because this long drought is sure to be followed by favourable seasons; then things come round again. It is the order of events in this part of the world, and though the people are always grumbling, and imagining that they are ruined by the innumerable 'crises,' agricultural and political, that are constantly varying the otherwise monotonous round of colonial life, they do in time grow rich. The simple truth is, I am tired of Australian life."

"Then you will move off elsewhere, I suppose," said Harry.

"I have not the most remote idea of what I shall do or where I shall go when I have settled things at Koonappa. You know the old saying about the 'long lane.' I have been travelling along that for some years, and I imagine I shall come to the turn in it some day, then I shall know better where I am going."

"Do you know Morton?" enquired Harry.

"Yes, very well; it is the prettiest place in the neighbourhood of Adelaide."

"We have taken a cottage there."

"You will like that, Miss Vernon," Arthur said, addressing Isabelle.

"I think I shall, from Harry's description; and it will be such a treat to go to Church again. I believe I am looking forward to that more than to anything else."

"We shall value the means of grace more for having been so long deprived of them," said Mrs. Vernon.

"You must not expect to meet with many church people," rejoined Arthur.

"I do not. From the way in which the most solemn day in the year is kept, I should say that the members of the Church are few indeed in South Australia."

"Not only Good Friday; mamma, but the whole of Lent," said Isabelle.

"Yes; the seasons of the Christian year are almost unrecognised, but Good Friday is desecrated more than any other. It is simply observed as a public holiday. The newspapers are full of advertisements of picnics and pleasure excursions of all kinds arranged expressly for that day. I cannot but think that if the clergy did their duty they might be some check upon such profanity."

"The clergy of South Australia, speaking of them as a body, are not churchmen, Mrs. Vernon, as I understand the meaning of the word," said Arthur.

"There are some honourable exceptions, but the majority consists of men who ought to join the dissenters, and who would join them, or, at any rate, give up their office in the Church, if they were true honest men. They have professed their belief in the Thirty-nine Articles, interpreting them in a non-Catholic sense, to meet their own views, and they ignore the doctrine of the Prayer Book, *in toto*. The Catechism is not even taught, so I have been told, in many of the Sunday schools."

"In that case the very rudiments of Church doctrine will be unknown to the rising generation," said Mrs. Vernon.

"I thought they were obliged to teach the Catechism in Church schools. Are they not, mamma?" enquired Isabelle.

"A clergyman who does not feel himself under an obligation to keep his Ordination vows, would, I imagine, be very indifferent whether the Catechism was taught in his school or not."

"A remote cousin of my mother's, an old naval officer, used to impress upon my juvenile mind the necessity of obedience and strict discipline. I thought his advice a great bore sometimes," continued Arthur, "but many a time since, I have had cause to thank him for it."

"It has been said that 'the love of money is the root of all evil,'" rejoined Mrs. Vernon. "I am inclined to say the same of disobedience. It is certain that if clergymen obeyed the Church, only Catholic doctrine could be taught from her pulpits or in her schools, but now that the abuse of private judgment has opened the door to so-called 'liberalism,' and let in a flood of heresy and schism, the first principle of the Gospel, obedience, is cast aside, every man teaches what is right in his own eyes, and the result is that the Church is languishing, and cannot make her inherent power and strength felt. Her priests have much to answer for."

"A few years ago," said Arthur, "I was staying for a short time in one of the northern townships, and was introduced to the incumbent. He was a clever, accomplished man of the world. I think my first impression, after spending an evening with him, was, that he had missed his vocation, that he would have made a better engineer, or schoolmaster, or soldier, than a clergyman. He was very affable and polite, but there was visible occasionally a dictatorial dogmatic way of speaking and looking which I did not like. I heard after-

wards that he was domineering and tyrannical to a high degree, one of those men who would sacrifice honour and truth itself to attain an object or an end on which they have once determined."

"It seems to me," said Harry, "that such a man must know, that he could not, or would not, it does not matter which, submit to others, consequently he had no right to become a priest of the Church."

"I suppose he settled that little matter with his own conscience in some way best known to himself; but what made me refer to him at all was this. Mrs. Vernon's last remark reminded me of the circumstance, as it proves how completely Catholic doctrine is ignored or trifled with by some men. I happened one day to hear a discussion between this clergyman and a member of his congregation who believed that Baptism is generally necessary to salvation. This 'pastor and guide of his little flock,'—that appeared to be a favourite figure of speech with him,—stoutly denied the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, and spoke of the Sacrament as a mere formal admission into the visible Church. A few days after I was passing the church; the door was open, and on looking in I saw that a child was about to be baptized. In a moment I found myself in the church, wondering what this free-thinker would do with the Service."

"He left out portions of it, I presume," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Not at all; he read every word, unhesitatingly and unblushingly; prayed that the water might be sanctified; then sprinkled the child, signed it with the sign of the cross, using the words, 'I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;' and afterwards knelt

down and thanked God that the child was regenerate. I looked at him hard, but he did not flinch."

"I have an idea," said Harry, "that when all causes are tried at the last day, a case of that kind will not be set down in the list of venial sins."

"That is my opinion," replied Arthur. "I do not suppose I thought as much of it as older and more serious-minded persons would, but I was disgusted. I felt at the moment that for an unbeliever in baptismal regeneration to read that service was awful mockery. I have often thought of it since, and every time I do think of it, the sin assumes, to me, a deeper dye."

"Did you ask him afterwards how he got on with his conscience, or rather what he had done with it?" enquired Harry.

"No; I felt that we were made of different stuff, that our minds were not cast in the same mould; in short, I hate hypocrisy, and so cut the acquaintance. I heard him preach once, and he consigned everyone, in the coolest way, to perdition, who did not believe precisely as he did."

"He was a Calvinist, I suspect," said Mrs. Vernon.

"A stern, bigoted one, evidently. You seem shocked, Miss Vernon," Arthur said, addressing Isabelle, who had been looking intently at him while he related the scene in the church, and what had been said previously..

"I never knew till now that such things could be done," she replied.

"They could not if the discipline of the Church were enforced," said Mrs. Vernon. "I hope the time is not far distant when the bishops will compel

obedience to the Church, and excommunicate all traitors. False teachers are worse than none."

Arthur leaned back in his chair as if tired. The photograph album was still in his hand, but he turned the leaves over mechanically,—his thoughts were occupied by some other subject. Suddenly his attention seemed arrested, he raised the book and looked intently at the page before him. After gazing at it for some time, he appeared to be about to speak, but his lips closed again, and he remained silent, as he turned leaf after leaf, not listlessly as he had done before, but with avidity, as if he expected to meet some object of interest. The last page was turned, and he reverted to the one on which his eye had rested so long before. At last he laid the book down.

"Are those photographs of private friends," he asked, "or are some of them public characters?"

"All of them dear English friends," said Isabelle, warmly. "Have you recognised any of them?"


"I traced a resemblance in one of them to—" He stopped, and there was that in his manner which checked Isabelle, who had risen, and was about to take the book from the table. He read her intention in her face, and replied to it.

"Some other time I shall probably take the liberty of enquiring of Miss Vernon whose portrait it is that has interested me so much."





CHAPTER XXVII.

“UR last day at Kooroona, Edie ! How do you like thinking that it is the last ?” said Isabelle.

“Not so well as I thought I should. A month ago I was almost impatient to start, and I shall like the change, and enjoy seeing different people and things, I know, but it is not pleasant to go away from a place where you have been happy, and to feel that you may never see it again. Has mamma said anything to you, Isa, about not coming back ?”

“No ; why do you ask ?”

“Because she is leaving nothing here that belongs to us ; and she told me this morning to look over all my drawers, and places where we have kept things, that we may be sure no letters or papers of any kind are left behind. That reminds me of an old letter-case of yours, which I found on the top shelf of a cupboard. I laid it aside, intending to bring it to you when I had finished my search.”

Edith left the room as she spoke, returning almost immediately with the letter-case.

“Thank you,” said Isabelle, taking it from her. “I do not know how I came to forget this ; it is full of old letters. I think I will look them over


and burn some of them, unless mamma wants me to help her."

"No, I am sure she does not, for I left her writing to Mrs. Graham. She says she may not have time to write for the next mail if she leave doing so till we get to Adelaide. I must go and finish my packing now."

It was one of those warm, bright, enjoyable days, of which there are so many during an Australian winter. Winter it is called, but that season is more like a long, sunny spring in England. The gardens are in full beauty, the trees have young light green leaves contrasting with the darker ones of a year's growth, and the flowers open day by day as if rejoicing in the fresh breeze and the bright sunlight.

Isabelle drew a low chair towards one of the windows, and sat down to look over her letters.

There is nothing that brings the past so vividly before us as reading old letters,—the thoughts of those from whom death or some other cause has separated us for years; those thoughts which assumed a tangible form when sketched on paper by the hand which is but the instrument directed and put in motion by that wonderful thing called the "will," that *something* which God gave to man, leaving him free to use it for good or evil. Those thoughts are something more than reflections or images; they are emanations of the real, though invisible part of man, of that which, as long as it tenants the earthly tabernacle, makes it beautiful with life; that gone, the rest crumbles away, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," the hand is powerless, motionless, the thoughts it transcribed live on like the mind from which they emanated, exercising an influence on the minds of others. Those thoughts



may be sparkles of truth, which, because they are truth, will be transformed into jewels to glitter in a heavenly crown ; or they may be false meteors which will lead those who follow them into the regions of eternal remorse and darkness. Old letters ! They are more real than pictures, however life-like those may be. As you read the words penned, you seem again to hear the voice that once may have spoken them,—to see the look of love or interest, the light smile, or the kind, grave, gentle, yet reproachful glance, which we know would steal over the face of the writer as the hand moved in obedience to the moving power. The question, “Do you remember ?” and the mention of a single object, will often bring in a flood of recollections, which the daily duties of life, other interests and other scenes, may have shrouded, but which never have been and never will be obliterated ; and as you read the question, written by one dearly loved, one not seen for many a long year, perhaps never to be seen again in this life, the heart seems to stand still ; but it does not break,—it did not before, why should it now, when every moment is bearing us nearer to that land where there will be no partings ?

As Isabelle looked over the contents of her letter-case, many notes were laid aside to be burned, others to be kept to read again some other time. At length she opened one which she had received from her mother during a short visit from home. There was a postscript in her father's writing,—only a few words,—“Come home, dear child, as soon as you like. We miss you everywhere.” Isabelle's eyes filled with tears. Her first thought was, “all that love lost to me for life ;” her next,—perhaps

her guardian angel whispered the words "Thy brother shall rise again,"—was of life beyond the grave. Isabelle had been taught the Christian's creed, and by faith she saw the Christian's "morning star" shining brightly above the mists and vapours of earth. She closed the letter and sat thinking of the past, half unconsciously tracing lines on a sheet of paper which lay open before her. Gradually her attention became absorbed in her occupation. The outline of an ancient stone mansion, and some huge oaks with their gnarled and knotted branches, became visible. So intent was she on the sketch before her, that she did not hear footsteps approaching her, and Arthur Percy was standing beside her when she woke up from a dream of the past to a knowledge that she was not alone.

"Am I disturbing you, Miss Vernon?" he said.

"No, thank you," was the quiet reply, so quietly and gravely given, that Arthur looked down on the young face of her who spoke, wondering what deep shadow rested upon her spirit; but the current of his thoughts was diverted in a moment, and when Isabelle raised her eyes to his, he was thinking only of what he saw,—a face of rare beauty,—not the beauty of regular features and a bright complexion only, but that of a more enduring kind. As he looked at her, he felt that a *hoch-beseeltes Madchen* was before him.

"I have been reading some old letters," she continued, "and they carried me away from Australia."

"I suppose it is pleasant to receive letters from friends?"

"You only suppose, Mr. Percy! Do you not know that it is pleasant? I should have



thought there could not be two opinions on that subject."

"I have had few opportunities of knowing whether letters give pleasure or not. I have not received one since I left England that was not torn up as soon as read, or laid aside as a memorandum. I have a few old letters that were written to me at Oxford, but I never look at them."

"Have you, then, no—. I beg your pardon," said Isabelle, hesitating and blushing. "How lonely a person must feel when—" then feeling that the last remark was not improving her position, she left the sentence unfinished.

Arthur smiled, but it was not the glad, beaming smile that was one of his characteristics. It was, to borrow an expression from the great northern bard,

"Like a sun-glimpse through a shower ;
A watery ray a moment seen,
The darkly closing clouds between."

"Have I no friends? That is what you would say, Miss Vernon. I do not know; if I have, a wide gulf separates us. As to the loneliness of my position, I never fully realized it till within the last few days."

"It must be very disagreeable and painful to be ill among strangers."

"You mistake my meaning. I see," glancing at the paper which lay on the open letter-case, "you have been sketching. You know that the effect of a picture is produced by light and shade. So it is with life; the last few days have shewn me the sunny side of it. I never had a glimpse of it before, and the view has opened upon me suddenly, after travelling along a road which, if not gloomy,

was destitute of all which, I now see, makes life a different thing from what I have imagined it to be. To-morrow it will be hidden again."

"The sun will soon set," said Isabelle, "but—"

"It will rise again. Those were the words you left me to add, were they not?" said Percy, as Isabelle paused and turned her eyes from the setting sun to Arthur's face.

"Yes; and look, Mr. Percy, at that small cloud. It has hidden the sun entirely, but its edges are fringed with gold. We know by that that the sun is there, though we cannot see it, and that if we watch for it the source of that golden light will shew itself."

"I think I read your lesson, and shall try to remember it. May I look at your sketch?"

"It is but an outline, begun without thinking of what I was doing. My thoughts were fixed upon the spot, and at first my fingers moved almost involuntarily; then, as the lines assumed a definite shape, I roused myself and added others. It is our English home."

She placed it in Arthur's hand as she spoke. He looked at it eagerly and intently.

"Do you recognise the Hermitage? Have you ever seen it?" she asked, quickly.

"It is very like a place I once saw," was the answer, slowly and cautiously given.

"I cannot fancy any place being like our own old home. There never will be any place in the world equal to it in my estimation."

"You remind me again, Miss Vernon, of the lights and shadows of life. Warm feelings and old associations are powerful painters."

"Not needed, however, to make the Hermitage

beautiful. I think a stranger's eye would rest upon it, as yours did, Mr. Percy, when you looked at that rough sketch."

"You are a critical observer," rejoined Arthur. "I suppose the best wish I can offer is, that you may soon see again the home you love so well."

"Thank you. For Harry's sake I should be glad, even more than for my own; but I try not to think too much about it. You know, Mr. Percy, sheep farmers are not getting rich in Australia now, and our going to live at our old home depends upon Harry becoming a rich man."

"Then this old home is not entirely lost to you."

"Oh, no. Papa's oldest friend took to it, till Harry could go and live there again. He would not keep it a day if we were able to buy it back again. He is very kind, and often writes to mamma to ask how Harry is getting on here. I shall never forget him, and he looks just what he is, everything that is good and noble. You have seen his portrait, Mr. Percy, though you may not have noticed it particularly. It is in the photograph album which Edith gave to you to look over the first evening you came into the drawing-room."

"Can you describe it? I may remember."

"He is tall, and his face is oval, with a high forehead, and dark hair. He generally looked grave, as he did when the photograph was taken; but when he smiled, it was a real smile,—you felt that it was."

"You are describing the original rather than the portrait, Miss Vernon."

"I certainly was thinking of the reality, and it is strange that you sometimes remind me of him."

I never thought before what it was, but I know now, it is the smile; you look like Sir John Carleton at this moment."

Some letters fell from her lap to the floor, and as she stooped to pick them up, she did not see the sudden flash of feeling that was visible in Arthur's face as she spoke that name.

"And he writes often," said Arthur, reverting to a former remark. "Is it long since you heard from—this old friend?"

"Longer than usual. Mamma is afraid that he may be ill. He has not written since Lady Carleton died."

"How long ago is that?" enquired Arthur, forgetting in his eagerness for information that such enquiries as he was making must, from a comparative stranger, appear out of place. Isabelle's thoughts were, however too intent upon old friends and associations to observe anything more than that Arthur was manifesting a kind interest in a subject that interested her, and she replied,—

"I cannot remember exactly how many months have passed since he wrote. Lady Carleton was killed, at least she died a few hours after meeting with an accident occasioned by the horses taking fright when she was out driving. A cousin of mamma's was staying at the Hermitage at the time, and she sent us all particulars a few months ago. Poor Sir John! He must be so lonely now."

"Has he no children?"

"No."

"Nor any relations,—no brother?"

"His only brother died a few years ago. Are you not well, Mr. Percy?" as Arthur suddenly became paler.

"Yes, thank you. I am tired, I believe, after my walk."

"And you have been standing all this time while I have been talking to you about things and persons that only concern ourselves. Sit down and let me fetch you a glass of wine."

"I could not think of it, Miss Vernon. I will sit down *conditionally* that you do so too, while I thank you for talking to me of what interests yourself; but you are mistaken if you think that the subject has no interest for me. I have been many years in this colony, and have never during the whole time, met with anyone, till I came here, to whom I cared to speak about England. As for listening to any conversation about the old country, I never do; I hear remarks, of course, but the ideas of the generality of the colonists are diametrically opposed to my own; they seem peculiar to a class with which I have nothing in common, and their words pass unheeded. In short something is continually occurring to make me feel that I am thoroughly English, while others are cosmopolitans,—at home wherever they can accumulate money."

"Well, Percy! how are you after your walk?" said Harry, entering the room, "feeling strong enough to start for Koonappa to-morrow morning, or did you find yourself soliloquizing as you got towards home, and repeating the words of some 'great poet,'—

"'Oh, when I think of what I are,
And what I used to was.'?"

"I did not think of Koonappa, nor of myself, nor of the poet. As to how I am, I believe I must confess to feeling tired."

"I am glad to hear it. You will perhaps give up your wild notion of leaving here to-morrow."

"You did not think of doing so, surely, Mr. Percy," said Isabelle.

"Indeed he did," rejoined Harry, "he said he should start as soon as we were off. I told him he was not fit to go, he said he was, and to prove that I was right I suggested that he should walk straight away till he began to feel tired and see how he managed the walk back. How far did you go?"

"Not so far as I intended. I shall have to stay here for a few days longer."

"I knew you must. I wish we could stay, but the criminal sittings commence next week and I must be in town then."

"It will be very dull for you," said Isabelle. "Mamma is very sorry that we are obliged to start."

"She cannot regret it so much as I do. When to-morrow comes I shall wake up from a pleasant dream to find myself alone, as I always have been."

"You will not have to stay long at Koonappa," said Harry.

"No; a very short time will suffice."

"And then you will come to Adelaide?"

"There is nothing else for me to do that I can see, there is nowhere else to go."

"Grant's Peninsula?" suggested Harry.

"No, thank you, one visit is enough; and now I think of it, let me advise you never to touch mining scrip. Cornishmen are rather fond of 'revivals' of one kind or other, and as soon as there is an improvement in the copper world, promising mines will spring up like mushrooms; and if you happen to be honoured by the acquaint-

ance of a sharebroker you will be told, in confidence of course, that you will be certain to make a large fortune in each of them if you will but take shares."

"And authorise him to procure them for me," said Harry.

"Yes, that would be understood. All I can say is, don't believe a word that anyone tells you about mining, and have nothing to do with sharebrokers."

"Your experience will be a warning to me; but you are advising me as if this were your last opportunity. Don't you mean ever to go to Morton?"

"If I may, I shall probably find my way there often while you are there."

The hours seemed to fly that last evening. Arthur Percy spoke less than usual, he looked dispirited, almost gloomy, and Harry thought he had walked too far. It was not till Mrs. Vernon proposed that all should retire early, as they had to be up with the sun, that he roused himself to say,—

"Miss Vernon, will you let me hear one song, and may I choose it?"

"I will sing anything you wish that I can remember without having the notes before me."

He rose and opened the piano, and as Isabelle sat down she looked up, saying,—

"What am I to sing?"

"An old song which I have heard you sing once before, two days after I was brought here, and it reminded me strangely of my mother. I fancied as I lay in bed listening to you that I could see my mother seated at her harp, and singing the first verse of 'Home, Sweet Home.' It was the first and last time she ever sang that song; why she did

not finish it I did not know ; I was a child at the time, and used to wonder why, when I asked her to sing it again, she always said she could not. I believe I know now."

Arthur had forgotten in that brief moment, that he was speaking to one whom he did not know only one short week ago, and Isabelle's answer, given in a soft, low voice, was not calculated to remind him of the fact.

"I am glad you have asked me to sing that old favourite of mine. I feel as if I should not care to sing any other to-night."

Arthur stood with his arms folded, leaning against the wall, near the piano, his eyes rivetted on the floor. When the last note died away, he looked up at Isabelle, and said, "Thank you."

It was a look Isabelle never forgot.





CHAPTER XXVIII.



THE day for the trial of Wahreep arrived.

"Well, Edie, how do you feel this morning, — up to the mark?" was Harry's greeting.

"Don't ask me anything about it. If I think of myself for a moment, I feel inclined to draw back, and that I dare not do; for if I did, and Wahreep were condemned, I should always believe that my evidence might have saved him."

"Edie will do her part well at the last," said Isabelle. "She knows that her evidence may have great weight on the mind of a clear-sighted, just, and merciful judge, and that, from what Mr. Percy told us, Mr. Justice Barmouth is; but the less she thinks of herself before going into the witness-box the better."

"The thought of it almost frightens me; everyone will be looking at me when I speak."


"Do as you have done, dear," said Mrs. Vernon; "think only of that poor creature, charged with a crime which we are sure he never committed, standing defenceless, and without a friend in this world but ourselves, to be tried by laws of which he has never heard, and you will not falter."

"I dare say the sight of Wahreep will make me forget everything else," said Edith. "You are sure,

Harry, that he will make no mistake,—that he quite understands that he is to call upon me for evidence? You know he is very shy; he may not like to do it, or he may get frightened.”

“I think I have made him understand that all he has to do is to repeat just what he said to Mr. Hayton, and to call upon you to give evidence about the chain. I have told him that he is to do so, and you know he obeys orders. He will be sure not to forget to call me. It is a good thing we have Judge Barmouth on the bench; he will admit of nothing but strict justice according to English law, and, in addition to that, he regards the trial of the aborigines by laws they cannot understand, as wrong and unjust in itself, besides being, in most cases, a great farce; so that we may feel sure he will be as lenient as the law will allow him to be. Percy says it is because he is right, and honest enough to maintain the right in opposition to lawless ignorance and incapacity, that he is so unpopular in this colony.”

The court was crowded, and many an enquiring glance was turned upon Mrs. Vernon and her party. No one knew them, and as in small towns and villages in England everyone knows everyone else, so it is in the lively little city of Adelaide, and all its inhabitants are immediately on the *qui vive* if a stranger appear among them to know who he is. There are some persons who, without desiring it, and quite unconsciously, attract attention, who are, as it were, marked, and an isolated position is assigned to them by common consent; every act and movement are watched and commented upon, and this court of equity holds its sittings, if an individual be different to the ordinary mass of mankind, through a life-time. Others appear on the



scene, may be a nine days' wonder, then find their own level among thousands, and henceforth are as drops in the ocean, atoms in that mass of mediocrity which excites neither envy, approval, or condemnation. Mrs. Vernon's position in England sheltered her from the weapons which sooner or later make those, who are not so fortunate as to remain within entrenchments which it is difficult, in an old country, to throw down, feel that they are, for some reason or other, singled out for attacks of various kinds; and therefore she was unconscious of the ordeal she might have to pass through in Australia, and of the qualifications she and her children possessed, which would inevitably attract observation.

It was generally known that an aboriginal native was to be tried for the murder of a white man, and several wealthy squatters, who, as a body, are unfriendly to the black race, were present in the court.

When the Judge took his seat, he looked round on the assembly. He knew, from his long residence among the people, the mould in which their minds were cast, and that the general feeling was that, for the safety of the white settlers, every outrage committed by a black man, no matter what provocation he had received, ought to be punished by the utmost penalty the law could inflict.

The prisoner was ordered to be brought into court, and Harry's honest, kind heart beat more quickly as the eyes of the poor black man wandered round in search of one friendly face. There he stood, one of a degraded race, alone, despised, to be judged by men who had taken possession of his land, and who knew no more of his language than he did of their laws.

The Crown Solicitor briefly stated the case against

the prisoner, and then called the witnesses on whose evidence he depended to prove the charge.


Duncan was first examined, then one of the natives who was with him when the body was found ; but the Crown Solicitor found it impossible to make him understand his questions. In fact, it turned out that he could neither understand or speak English, and there was no interpreter in court.

The next witness proved to be equally ignorant, and the Judge commented severely on the injustice of bringing aborigines three hundred miles, and keeping them as prisoners for two months, whose evidence could not be taken in consequence of their not understanding English, and particularly in this case, where it would appear from the deposition, that that evidence, could it have been taken, was quite immaterial to the issue of the case.

One of the policemen produced the piece of chain attached to the waistcoat of the murdered man, and also the piece which the child had found. No fresh evidence was elicited on that point.

The policeman was then called who found the spear, which was handed to the Judge, with the hair still adhering to it. He scrutinized it carefully, and enquired if any of the hair of the person found had been preserved ?

The Crown Solicitor replied in the negative, and said that before closing the case for the prosecution, he wished to state that there was one witness, the wife of the prisoner, whom he had not called, whose evidence, his Honour would see by referring to the depositions, accounted for the piece of chain being in possession of the child, and that, as she was in court, if his Honour thought it right to give the prisoner the benefit of her evidence, he would call her.



"Bring the witness forward," said the Judge.

Koonid gave her evidence, as far as her little knowledge of English would permit, in the same simple, straightforward way she had before given it to Mr. Hayton. There was no contradiction, no discrepancy, between anything she said in court and when her evidence was first taken.

The Judge then addressed the prisoner, who had not spoken since he pleaded "not guilty," and asked him if he had any witnesses to call.

"Miss Edith Vernon," were the words which fell audibly and distinctly from Wahreep's lips, instead of the single monosyllable that all expected to hear, and the surprise of all present was great when Harry rose and conducted his sister to the witness box. There was no hesitation on Edith's part; she looked and moved like one who had something to do and who would do it at any cost; but many noticed her changing colour. She was paler than Harry ever remembered seeing her, when she stood alone before the Judge with her eyes fixed on the ground. Very fair she looked, and not a few forgot for a moment the business of the court in wondering who she was. There was a brief silence, broken by the Judge asking "what she had to say in favour of the prisoner?"

Edith looked up, and began to speak in so low a tone that her words could not have been heard but for the dead silence that prevailed. She related, as a child might have done, the details of the first discovery of the chain, and the answers which her own questions to Muhnard elicited. Her voice grew more steady and louder as she proceeded. When she had told all she knew, done all she could, she looked at Wahreep. It was well her eyes had

not turned in that direction before. He looked so friendless, so helpless, so dejected ; the expression of his eyes, which were fixed upon her with an appealing earnestness of expression, as if asking her to save him from a horrible death, was more than she could bear calmly ; the court, the Judge, the people, all vanished for a single moment ; Edith saw nothing but Wahreep, and to him she said,—

“ Poor Wahreep ! God will save you yet.”

She spoke the words warmly, passionately, recollected herself, and, from some sudden revulsion of feeling, became in a moment pale and rigid as a statue.

The Crown Solicitor said he had no questions to ask, and Edith was told that she might leave the box.

The Judge again addressed the prisoner, enquiring if he had any more witnesses to call, and on his naming Mr. Vernon, Harry entered the box.

He said that before bringing forward the only direct evidence he had in favour of the prisoner, he wished to state publicly that from having an intimate knowledge of the man's character, a knowledge gained during a period of five year's faithful servitude, he knew him to be incapable of committing the crime with which he stood charged. However strong the evidence might be against him, if sufficiently conclusive to lead to his condemnation, his belief in the man's innocence would not have been shaken, had he not, without at the time having any idea of the importance of the act, taken a step which enabled him now to prove that the prisoner was innocent. For several weeks after the committal, he had been expecting the return of the prisoner's brother, who, about the

time that the murder must have been perpetrated, joined some men of his tribe on a distant expedition. This man, he thought, from another circumstance which occurred about the same time, would have been able to account satisfactorily for the state in which Wahreep's spear had been found, but he died, and it was only within the last two days, he had known that he had in his possession, that which confirmed his previous suspicions and proved the prisoner's innocence.

The Crown-Solicitor said he had a few questions to ask the witness. It would be necessary to know what that circumstance was to which the witness referred, and how it was, in any way, connected with the spear.

Harry detailed the attack upon Koonid, and her rescue by some unknown person; the disappearance of Meenulta the same evening, which led to the conclusion that he might have been the one who threw the spear, and that that spear may have been Wahreep's. It was known that Meenulta was hunting that day. They understood that he left the neighbourhood suddenly to be out of the way of the northern tribes, lest they should revenge themselves for the injury inflicted on one of their men. That was the conclusion arrived at; Harry could not say it was so, but it was highly probable.

Harry proceeded to say that when the spear was found by the policemen, he had secured a few of the hairs that were adhering to it; that he had on his arrival in Adelaide three days ago, submitted them to the investigation of a scientific man, whose evidence the prisoner would now call for, unless

the Crown-Solicitor wished to ask him any further questions.

Harry was told that he might retire, and all eyes were now turned on poor Wahreep, who did not understand how anyone could clear him, if Harry could not, or what the hair had to do with the question ; moreover he had forgotten, or could not pronounce, the name of this last witness in his favour, and he looked imploringly at Harry as he left the witness-box.

The judge desired him to call the next witness, but still Wahreep did not speak. Harry turned towards him and seeing the poor fellow's perplexity, conjectured the cause, and addressing the judge, said,—

“The prisoner does not speak German and has forgotten the name. Have I your Honour's permission to give it for him?”

The judge signified his assent, and a German medical practitioner came forward. He produced a few hairs, which were handed to the judge, and were by him and the jury carefully compared with that adhering to the spear, and pronounced identical in colour and thickness. The witness was then asked what proof he had that the hair was not that of the murdered man ; that being the only point which was relevant to the question at issue.

“The proof is as simple as it is decisive. The man who was murdered was a European ; the hair belongs to one of a different race to the aborigines of Australia. I have examined the hair by the aid of a powerful microscope, and have clearly detected the difference that distinguishes the hair of different races of men. That hair could not have grown upon the head of a European, and is as

different from the hair of a white man, as is that of the negro or of the red Indian."

"Is that the whole of your evidence?" said the judge.

"No, your Honour. There is a minute portion of skin attached to the hair I have examined, and that is not the skin of a white man but of a black one."

There was little doubt upon the mind of anyone as to what the verdict would be after hearing the statement of the last witness. The judge briefly summed up, and animadverted in strong terms on the carelessness of the magistrate in not having preserved some hair from the head of the man murdered, as it now appeared, by some other weapon than the spear, which, up to the last moment, was such strong evidence against the prisoner; and which it could not have been had the investigation, in the first instance, been conducted judiciously and impartially. It was his opinion, from the evidence of the last witnesses, that the enquiry had been made in a careless and arbitrary manner.

"Mr. Hayton shall have a copy of the *Register*," said Harry, in a low tone to Edith.

"Yes. What do you think?"

"About the verdict?"

"Yes."

"It can be but one thing; he will be at liberty in less than an hour."

Harry was right. The jury retired; there was ten minutes suspense, and then the verdict was given,—

"Not Guilty."

Wahreep looked round, and Harry springing forward, laid his hand on his shoulder, as he said,—


"You are at liberty ; come with me."

A few hours later and Mrs. Brown was bustling about in a state of great excitement, preparing a plentiful repast "for the poor creatures she never expected to see again. It was a mercy that they were alive."





CHAPTER XXIX.

“OLLO, Percy!” exclaimed Harry, eagerly extending his hand. “Why, you are not like the same man we left at Koorroona.”

“I am the same; the same that you were nursing there, five weeks ago, only considerably stronger.”

“You look like another Hercules. When did you get to town?”

“Yesterday, too late to go farther, or you may have seen me at Morton.

How are Mrs. Vernon and—”

“All very well,” said Harry. “I see,” looking at his watch, “I have only five minutes to spare.”

“Then you have got some post?”

“Yes, a Government appointment; sounds well, doesn’t it?”

“More honour than pay,” said Percy, ironically,

“Little enough of either, according to my notions; but I must be off. Will you go back with me at five and stay all night?”

“I should like to do so, but—”

“Oh, you have no engagement that you cannot postpone?”

“I know of none I am likely to make that I would not set aside with pleasure to accept your invitation. I was thinking only of intruding so unceremoniously on Mrs. Vernon.”

"She will be very glad to see you, so you have no excuse ; we expected you sooner."

"I could not manage to leave the north earlier ; I had to see Hayton and another."

"Ah ! did he say anything about the trial ?"

"He is highly indignant with the judge ; considers his remarks improper, and calculated to do much mischief by lowering the magisterial office."

"He can't forgive the exposure of his oversight and prejudice. Had he the grace to express any sort of satisfaction that the poor fellow escaped hanging."

"The nearest approach to it was saying, that if the man did not commit the murder, it would not have done to hang him ; but unless the mystery connected with the chain could be cleared up on better evidence than the word of a black woman and her child, he should always consider that Wahreep was implicated in some measure."

"The fact of the matter is," said Harry, indignantly, "that 'on principle' he considers it a greater crime to convict him, a white man, a justice of the peace, and no one knows what else besides in his own estimation, of error, than to hang a black man, even if he is innocent. Good morning, Winter. I'll walk to the office with you, if you will stay a moment. Then," turning to Arthur, "you will meet me at the Morton omnibus at five."

"Yes."

"You know that conceited fellow, I see," said little Mr. Winter, who was a junior clerk in the same department as Harry.

"Do you mean Mr. Percy ?" said Harry, looking down upon the junior much in the same way that an English mastiff regards a small cur who is taking liberties with him.

"Yes; Mr. Arthur Percy, as he is always called."

"Do *you* know him?" enquired Harry.

"Well, not exactly, I have seen him at a few public balls and concerts two or three years ago; he has been out of the way lately, has not exhibited himself for an age."

"Oh, is that all?" said Harry, only noticing the first part of the answer. "In that case I don't see how you can know whether he is conceited or not."

"Everyone thinks the same as I do about him."

"Then everyone is a donkey."

"Thank you; but upon my word it's a fact, at least as regards *us*; the women you know are always taken with a good-looking fellow more than six feet high, especially if he is always polite to them without caring a straw for them; so their opinion goes for nothing."

"That is *your* opinion, is it?"

"It is a fact;" and Mr. Winter, who might have measured five feet four in his boots, which were always distinguished by unusually high heels, made to order, and who had, as many small men have, a great "down" on tall men, shrugged his shoulders, and looked as he felt at the moment, very much dissatisfied with things in general.

"Poor fellow!" said Harry to himself, "perhaps he has found his small stature an obstacle to preferment, so I won't be hard on him, though he does deserve kicking. How conceited and forward all these colonial-born chaps are!" with which mental comment he dismissed the subject from his mind.

Isabelle was standing with her back to the door, re-arranging some flowers for the mere delight of looking at them and enjoying their fragrance, when

Harry entered the room, followed by Arthur. Without looking round, she exclaimed,—

“Just in time, Harry, for Mr. Percy’s favourite tea-cakes. Mrs. Brown announced that ‘they were quite done without being overdone, a few minutes ago, and hoped *that* omnibus would not keep you on the road as it does sometimes.’”

A sudden exclamation from Edith made her turn towards the door, as Harry said,—

“Mrs. Brown will call this a ‘coincidence,’ here is Mr. Percy come to eat the cakes.”

Isabelle laughed, as with a slightly heightened colour, she held out her hand to Arthur.

“I need not ask if you are quite strong again,” she said, looking up at him.

“You mean that I look as little in need of the care that was lavished upon me a few weeks ago, as I believe I always did before that little adventure.”

“Can you call it a little one?” said Edith, as he turned to shake hands with her.

“I suppose I ought not; but one often speaks without thinking. No; it was not a little adventure in any sense of the word.”

Mrs. Vernon gave Arthur a hearty welcome. In a few moments all had gathered round the tea-table, and Edith said, gaily,—

“This is like our last evening at Kooroona, only you look so different, Mr. Percy.”

“So I told him this morning,” said Harry.

“I was but the shadow of myself then,” replied Arthur, “but I am not disposed to regret that accident.”

“Not regret it!” exclaimed Edith.

“No; on the contrary I am very glad that it happened.”

Edith looked as if she did not understand, and Arthur added, —

“If it had not occurred, I should not be here now.”

“There, Edie! you see our friend Percy is not simply a hero of romance, a prince in disguise, lost in a forest, found according to the rules of fiction, and proved to be in every sense a *rara avis*; he is a mere ordinary mortal, who studies the *pros* and *cons*, and is satisfied in this case that losing himself and thereby finding some friends was a profitable speculation. I expect to find him a thorough man of business, *sharp*, as colonials say.”

“For shame, Harry! that is a slang word that means something very bad. You told me that in plain English it meant dishonest.”

“So it does,” said Harry, contriving to look serious; and Edith continued, —

“I should strongly advise my brother Harry to follow Mr. Percy’s example, in one thing at any rate; it might be a great improvement.”

“Hear the mentor of our family!” exclaimed Harry. “Now, Edie, enlighten a poor fellow; you know I am open to conviction.”

“Why you see, Harry, if Mr. Percy thought that losing himself was a small thing in comparison with what he gained, he must have a moderate appreciation of himself and entertain rather more humble notions than some others do in reference to themselves.”

“Really now, there is something in that. I shall begin to think seriously of procuring a note-book in which to set down Edith’s sententious remarks. What do you think, mamma? I could meditate upon them each day as I go to town, and eventually

publish the whole *pro bono publico*, under some such title as 'Reflections in an Omnibus.'"

"I think it is quite possible that your thoughts might be occupied in a less profitable way," was Mrs. Vernon's reply.

"I am sure they might," said Isabelle.

"You mean that? Very well; after that don't be surprised, Edie, to find yourself in print."

"I have been once and that is enough."

"Poor Edie! She cannot get over that," addressing Arthur, but in a changed tone.

"Her evidence on the trial?"

"Yes."

"It was dreadful, Mr. Percy," said Edith. "Before, and just when I began to speak; and after, when I thought of it all."

"Then, you ought only to have felt glad."

"I was glad; but you don't know; men cannot understand those things; I mean you cannot tell how we feel sometimes."

"I suppose not, but I think I understand what you mean; it was a hard task for you."

"She went through it however like—"

"A brick," whispered Edith, in Harry's ear.

"Like a sister of mine."

"Harry! you get worse."

"Well, Edie, I should have been disappointed in you, I am serious now, if you had not said and done what you had to do in the way you did it, thoroughly and heartily. I hate hearing of people allowing their feelings to prevent their doing what is right, making them unsürmountable obstacles. In nine cases out of ten it is mere affectation."

"Weakness perhaps," suggested Isabelle.

"That is one of your charitable constructions, Isa.

I believe it is what I say, that makes the majority of women fancy their feelings are such grand obstacles in the way of doing anything out of their ordinary path."

"They are not taught that obstacles are things to be overcome," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Mr. Hayton thought that Miss Edith Vernon's evidence was not of sufficient importance to justify anyone in encouraging her to pass the barrier of proper feminine reserve by coming forward publicly in a court of justice." Arthur Percy delivered this in Mr. Hayton's pompous, oracular style.

All laughed except Edith, and she looked very grave.

"Would anyone else think so, mamma?" she said, at last.

"No, dear, probably not another."

"Never let anything that such men as Mr. Hayton say trouble your little head," said Harry; "or I shall think you are deficient, and begin to examine your bumps. What a man that is for a J.P.! Narrow-minded, prejudiced, crotchety; unable to reason and argue a thing out; if he grasp one idea, you can't make him take in another, hammer as hard as you will."

"I should think that more suitable persons could be found to act than many of the magistrates appear to be," said Mrs. Vernon. "When reading the newspapers I have often seen it stated that the judge, after looking through the depositions, has said 'Mr. Crown Solicitor, is this all the evidence you have?' and upon receiving for answer that it is, the judge says 'it is useless to go on,' and orders the prisoner to be discharged."

"Oh! that is a case of very common occurrence," said Arthur.

"At one of the sittings last year there were only twenty-two convictions out of forty cases."

"A very pretty mockery of justice that is," said Harry. "I fancy I should not think it much compensation, supposing I had been committed by one of these wiseacres for some imaginary crime, and shut up for weeks where board and lodging are cheap, to be told that there was no clear evidence against me, and that I left the court without any stain upon my character."

"No ; it is rather hard for an Englishman to bear a thing of that kind ; but it is a natural consequence of living in a part of the British dominions where men who have never learned to govern themselves, and literally know nothing but the trade to which they earned a subsistence in the old country, are elevated to positions for which they are unfit in every way."

"My experience of colonial magistrates is confined to Mr. Hayton," said Harry.

"The finest specimen of magisterial dignity and learning I have met with in South Australia is to be found on Grant's Peninsula ; his name is Shallow—"

"Really ; isn't that a soubriquet of your own ?"

"No ; the man's name is Shallow and a curiously appropriate name it is. As a consequence of knowing nothing he imagines he knows everything. I was told that he had long been anxious to have J.P. attached to his name, and as soon as an opportunity occurred managed to get appointed. He had to be taught how to administer an oath."

"And how to sit on the bench ?" said Harry.

"Yes, with becoming dignity, and in an earnest, judicial, and well-bred manner ; but that he never could learn, it would be impossible ; he could no

more do that than he could originate an idea on any subject. The worst of it was that he was continually acting illegally."

"What was the stipendiary magistrate about to allow that?"

"Probably he knew nothing of it. He lived twelve or fourteen miles away from Mooganna. When Shallow was acting as coroner, no inquest was legal. The law requires that the coroner shall view the body; Shallow said he had 'strong objections' to seeing a dead body; therefore he held the inquests without doing so; and when he was aware of any case that was coming on at the Sitting of the Full Court, he would call on the parties concerned, question the witnesses, pre-judge the case, and then take his seat on the bench quite 'easy in his mind' that he was doing the correct thing—"

"'Easy in his mind!'" repeated Harry. "That was an expression of his own, I presume?"

"Yes," said Arthur, laughing; "it was one of poor Shallow's favourite expressions. I used to hear persons laughing at it. One hears everything when living at hotels."

"So," said Harry, "that is the way Her Britannic Majesty's laws are administered by British muffs, called magistrates, in this part of her dominions!"

"The best side of human nature is not to be seen here, I believe," said Arthur.

"I have long regarded the people in this colony as very unfavourable specimens of the English character; but it is easily accounted for."

"In what way?"

"In the first place every man, with a few rare exceptions, comes to Australia to improve his position in life by acquiring money; that is his object, and,

as a rule, he is indifferent as to the means by which he attains his object."

"His motto being, 'The end justifies the means,'" said Harry.


"Exactly; and his early training and occupation in life having given him no nobler aspirations, nothing to counterbalance the debasing influence which the mere love of and striving after money exercises upon the mind, he naturally becomes what we see him in Australia. In addition to that he has no substantial creed to help him to keep right; with the exception of the Roman Catholics nearly all the people are dissenters."

"There are a great many churches in the colony," said Isabelle.

"Attended by dissenters because it is considered 'more respectable' to go to church than to [a] methodist chapel. You may think that a very harsh, uncharitable remark, Miss Vernon, but it is not my own, except so far as entirely believing it to be true makes it so. Those words fell from the lips of a clergyman, one of the most charitable, kind-hearted men, I have ever known, and one who had better opportunities of forming a correct opinion of the motives which influence men's actions than I have had."

"That accounts for the languishing state of the Church," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Yes, that and other things; but when the majority of the clergy do not believe the doctrines of the Prayer Book, thereby using it as a matter of form, and because they are obliged to read the prayers, some of them at least, it is wonderful that the Church has an existence. You see, Mrs. Vernon," and Arthur, as he spoke, pushed his chair



back from the table, and leaning against it, folded his arms, as he almost always did when speaking earnestly, "you see, I was educated in England, and studied the Prayer Book at Oxford, and I regard the heresy and schismatical teaching which is tolerated within the pale of the English Church in the same light in which I should view the Eagle of France fraternising with the British Lion at a Cabinet-Council."

"I shall not stay in Australia a day longer than I can help," said Harry.

"Rather a singular remark to make, Harry, if you intended it as a reply to Mr. Percy's last observation," said Mrs. Vernon.

"My usual one, mamma. It is the first thing I think of whenever I hear anything that I don't like."

"Do you think you would never meet with anything you dislike in England?"

"I have not thought about it. I dare say I should, but I fancy a fellow could stand a good deal on English ground that would be unbearable here."

"Even a salary that is scarcely sufficient to pay omnibus fare and supply boots and gloves!" said Isabelle, archly.

"Yes, with the Hermitage my own," he added, in a lower tone. "I would discard gloves and take to the spade; there would be some satisfaction in digging land that belonged to one's forefathers."

"You are right," said Arthur. "There is only one thing that would reconcile me to living anywhere but in England, and that is what I do not possess at present."

"What is that?"

"The spirit that missionaries must have,—the will to live for others and set aside self."

"There is ample opportunity for the exertion of such a will in England," said Mrs. Vernon, "out casting the shadow of a reflection on the missionary, I have sometimes thought that if I chooses to work among the poor outcasts of the worst parts of London, and other large cities, Clay may be moulded to any form he has really a harder, a more painful, and a more difficult task to perform, than he who goes to savages. How do you like living at Morton, Miss Vernon?"

"Very much; the hills are so beautiful."

"Do you practice shooting now?"

"Oh, yes. There is to be a large party at Morton next month, and many of the members of the archery club will be there. Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien will give prizes, and we intend to try to gain one."

"You would like Mrs. O'Brien?"

"Yes; mamma likes her better than anyone I have seen since she came to Australia, except Mrs. Graham and Mrs. Lilleburn."

"The clergyman's wife?"

"Yes; do you know her?"

"Not Mrs. Lilleburn; I have known Mrs. O'Brien for some years. I must renew the acquaintance now, and measure my bow with some of the Adelaide club at the gathering at Morton Park. I have been to more than one very pleasant party there."

"Then you know some of the families who live here?"

"Very few. I have never been much in Adelaide, and for a long time have been away altogether. Do you know the Dashwoods?"

"Yes," was the quiet reply.

"We do," was the more emphatic one from Edith, who, leaning over Isabelle's shoulder, took a skein of silk from a work basket.

"Edie!" said Isabelle, looking up and laughing, "what a wicked little 'we do' that was."

"What is Edie up to now?" enquired Harry.

"Only speaking emphatically."

"Which always means mischief."

"Mr. Percy enquired if we knew the Dashwoods," said Edith, demurely, and I replied 'we do'—that is all."

"Aye, we have the honour," said Harry.

"There, Isabelle! where I was only emphatic, Harry is satirical."

"I feel bound to speak of the acquaintance in the same way in which I am quite sure that Mr. and Mrs. Dashwood regard it," rejoined Harry, "not from mamma's point of view at all."

"Indeed, Harry, you have no authority for saying what my thoughts are on that subject, for I have never expressed them."

"Not in words."

Isabelle smiled, and bent her head lower over her work.

"I see," said Mrs. Vernon, "that Isabelle knows what you mean though I do not."

"Shall I tell you?"

"If you like; I am a little curious to know."

"You remember one day last week going with Edie to the Parsonage, and Mrs. Dashwood's carriage was at the gate. You were too far off for Mrs. Lilleburn to stay to speak to you, but near enough to see that she opened the gate, and held it while Mrs. Dashwood passed through." Harry stopped.

"Yes, I am beginning to see what you mean."

"Well, this Mrs. Dashwood marches on, like a ship in full sail, flounces, flowers, feathers and all, straight ahead, gets into her own carriage, leaving Mrs. Lilleburn, who, though not more than half her size, would weigh a hundred times as much, if all the qualities you have taught me belong to a lady are recognised in Australia, to follow her. Edith told me about it the same evening while we were at tea, and I read all you thought of Mrs. Dashwood in your face."

"Must I take to wearing a mask," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Never, I hope. You do not know how much I have learned by looking at you; and sometimes what I have seen has stopped me sooner than if you had spoken. But I hate to see vulgar fine ladies setting themselves above Mrs. Lilleburn."

"Mrs. Dashwood stepped into her carriage before mamma one day that she asked us to accompany her to town, and then we started from her own house," said Isabelle, quietly, "but, Harry, that did not place her *above* mamma. She and Mrs. Lilleburn seem to me to be where Mrs. Dashwood cannot reach them."

"Now, mamma," said Harry, "you ought to lecture Isa. She has said the most severe thing of all. I know what you are thinking of, that we ought not to be talking about people, especially with Percy here; but he understands all this sort of thing; we had some long talks at Kooroona, and he does not admire 'stuck-up' people any more than I do."

"No," said Arthur, "I abominate them all, their ways I mean; as for themselves, many of them are good sort of people in their way, only they do not

know what is right or what to do in their new positions, and every allowance should be made."

"How do you feel, Edie?" said Harry, suddenly turning to her.

"I think I was feeling the force of Mr. Percy's last remark, just when you spoke."

"And I feel that we have got between two batteries: mamma's is the light artillery, and Percy's the heavy cannonade. Let us have some martial music," and he opened the piano as he spoke, "something suitable to the occasion."





CHAPTER XXX.



MORTON Parsonage was a pleasant place. Little could be said in favour of the house, for it was inconveniently small. Two or three rooms had been built in the earlier days of the colony, additions had been made from time to time, apparently without regard to appearance or to any known rules in the art of building, and a verandah, extending round two sides, made it appear a not unsuitable residence for a clergyman, in the eyes of the wealthy inhabitants of the district, when it became absolutely necessary to decide whether they should provide a parsonage or be without a pastor. The house was surrounded by gardens, fields, and hills, the grand old hills which man can neither make nor mar, which stand always where their Maker willed them to stand, monuments of His power and greatness. It was not, however, the beauties of still life, in the midst of which stood the many-small-roomed dwelling house, called Morton Parsonage, which gave to that dwelling place its greatest charm. It was those who lived within its walls, who made it what it was. The pastor was an English gentleman, a beautiful type of a class that is fast dying out; the good, true,

kindhearted, peace-loving man, who found happiness in his own home, in self-denying acts of kindness, which were not recognised by him, in his childlike simplicity, as acts of love and as sacrifices, but as matters of course. Many a gift, far beyond his means, was bestowed by the poor pastor of Morton with such a ready hand, and accompanied by such a genial smile and kindly word, that none would dream that, in a worldly sense, he and his wanted for themselves what was thus freely given to others; but he managed to do without it. The poor pastor! Was he poor? No, he was richer, far richer, than those who gave sparingly of their abundance to make up the income they deemed sufficient, not for themselves, but for their clergyman. He was the life and spirit of his own fire-side, and of every social gathering in which he took part. Some said he was indolent and careless of the poor, because he did not visit them so often and so regularly as other priests might do. It would be wiser for a man not to pass judgment in such a case. Had there been a trout stream near his parsonage, he would probably often have been found angling, when men, who were differently constituted, mentally and physically, would have said that he ought to have been visiting his people; but not the less did everyone feel in his heart that if a friend were wanted, he was to be found in him who was often judged by others, while he himself judged no man.

A village rectory in the old country, surrounded by cottages and the comfortable homes of plain, honest, English yeomen, with here and there the hall of a country gentleman, each tenanted by men who loved their church in the old-fashioned way of the last century, would seemingly have been

better suited to the pastor of Morton, than an incumbency in a newly settled land, peopled by a class of men glad to escape from all the wholesome restraint and conventional usages of one, where civilization, refinement, and luxury were the growth of centuries; a class imbued with all the the sectarian democratic views of the present day, and revelling in all the unbridled freedom of colonial life; but he was there, by the appointment or permission of "Him Who governs the world He created;" and those who knew him best, loved him most.

His gentle wife was a fitting companion for such a man. Earnest, loving, and self-sacrificing, unselfish to a degree seldom seen, she lived for others; herself least and last in her own estimation. She little knew how high she stood in the opinion of those who were able to understand and appreciate her. Mrs. Vernon, whose intellectual endowments far surpassed those of the pastor's wife, soon learned to regard her as one whom it was a privilege to know; and a feeling, warmer than ordinary friendship, sprang up between them; a feeling which after separation in no way affected; it began in Time, to live on in another life where the changes of Time will be unknown.

"Isabelle, it is *such* a day for gardening, bright and fresh, and there is no wind; let us set about training the passion-flower and clematis, they are looking wild in their luxuriance."

"Oh, I am so sorry I cannot; I should like it of all things this morning, but I have promised to go and help Rose to make a dress that she wants to finish to-day."

"Then you must go, but—never mind, I will do



it myself. I must be in the garden to-day; I don't feel as if I could stay in the house."

"Do not forget this afternoon, and tire yourself, Edie."

"No, my hand must be strong and steady. I should like to beat Mr. Percy to-day, but his arrow always goes straight to the point. You will not stay to dine at the parsonage?"

"I am only going for a few hours."

"Give my love to Rose and to dear Mrs. Lilleburn."

"Mrs. Lilleburn is not at home. Rose told me last night that she went yesterday to pay a long promised visit."

"A duty visit?" said Edith.

"I believe all Mrs. Lilleburn's are duty visits, for she evidently prefers home to any other place, only she thinks that if persons wish her to go and see them she must; it would be selfish in her to refuse."

"Well," said Edith, meditatively, "I never knew that I was selfish till I came to Morton."

"And what has made you think that you are now? I have not made the discovery."

"Mrs. Lilleburn has made me feel that I am. I do not think, Isa, that I could ever be like her; she never thinks of herself, not even enough to know that she does not, and that she is always thinking and doing for others."

"Perhaps," said Isabelle, "we ought to feel thankful that we can admire and love all that unselfish goodness and wish that we had more of it ourselves. I met with the remark the other day in that book Mr. Percy brought, 'Man can only sympathise with that which has an answering some-

thing in his own nature.' I am sure that is true, I felt that it was when I read it; and you know, Edie, we grow in goodness."

"Then you think that if I were very selfish, I should not love Mrs. Lilleburn for being unselfish."

"Something like that; but, Edie, dear, I cannot stay to talk; I ought to be stitching away at the parsonage in ten minutes from the present time."

When Isabelle arrived at the parsonage she found the usual sitting-room deserted, and the house in that state of discomfort and confusion attendant upon a 'general cleaning.' A good-tempered Irish girl met her at the door, and greeted her with the announcement,—

"We're a turning out the room now missis is gone, to have it all clean and comfortable like when she comes back. Please to go into missis's room; you'll find Miss Lilleburn there."

"You are really come to sew, to stay in the house with me this bright morning?" said Rose Lilleburn, as she met Isabelle.

"Yes; and I was told I should find you in Mrs. Lilleburn's room. Bridget seems very busy and important this morning."

"She is making a dreadful commotion. Papa has taken refuge in the dining-room, and I have taken possession of mamma's, as the quietest corner I can find. Poor Bridget! She is very rough, but she is good-natured, and we all like her."

"She has not improved her appearance by black-leading her face as well as the fireplace," said Isabelle. "I don't know what Harry would say if he saw her now."

"Does he still think her so extraordinarily ugly?"

"He laughs at the idea of her photographic appearance; but I think it was Mr. Lilleburn's quaint remark the day we were commenting upon it, that 'Bridget might be prettier,' which has made a lasting impression on his mind."

"Ah, that was one of papa's severe remarks."

"Early visitors, Rose!" said Isabelle, as they passed through a small ante-room, to the one beyond.

"Yes; Mrs. Bright came in soon after breakfast."

"Good morning, Miss Vernon. This appears to be Miss Lilleburn's reception room, in her mamma's absence."

"Now, Rose, give me some work," said Isabelle, after returning Mrs. Bright's greeting and enquiring after her children. "I am not come to be idle;" and as she sat down on a low seat and commenced hemming the skirt of a dress, Mrs. Bright continued a conversation which Isabelle's arrival appeared to have interrupted.

"So that is all Alan says! I wonder he does not tell you more; but I did not quite understand one remark."

"Perhaps I did not read it properly; Alan never will take the trouble to put any stops. You can see what he says yourself, Mrs. Bright," and Rose, as she spoke, put an open letter into that lady's hand, and resumed her work.

Mrs. Bright was related to Mrs. Dashwood, and lived in a pleasantly-situated house not far from the church. Mr. Bright had been fortunate in acquiring a very comfortable position in life, and he and his wife were so thoroughly good-hearted and

kind to all around them, that they were generally liked and respected, though they were rather rough diamonds; rough, but genuine. They had not been under the hands of a lapidary in their early days, and no amount of colonial polishing in after life proved successful. They made one mistake, and a very common one it is. Not content with the position which a fortunate train of circumstances and their own good qualities had established, they were continually seeking the society of persons who did not care to extend their acquaintance beyond those whose education and previous mode of life rendered companionship agreeable, and whose tastes were congenial to their own.

Mrs. Bright and Mrs. Dashwood had long coveted an acquaintance with Mrs. O'Brian, but all manœuvres failed, every move in advance was checkmated, and they never got beyond the gates of Morton Park, until fortune favoured Mrs. Dashwood by making one her guest for a few days who had known Mrs. O'Brian before either of them landed in Australia. This was an opportunity not to be lost by any fastidious punctilios or old-world conventionalities, and when Mrs. Harvey said she must call on Mrs. O'Brian, Mrs. Dashwood ordered her carriage, entered it triumphantly, took a seat beside her visitor, and gave the order, "To Morton Park."

Mrs. O'Brien was at home and received the card which a servant presented, with the exclamation, "Impossible." It was Mrs. Dashwood's card. Turning to a friend, she said,—"There must be some mistake, I do not know Mrs. Dashwood."

"Her pair of greys are at the door, nevertheless," was the reply. "Have you not lived long

enough in Australia to know that nothing of this kind is impossible?"

It was a clever *coup de main*. The thing was done. Mrs. Dashwood was enabled to repeat what Mrs. O'Brian had said, and to announce to her own set that the gardens at Morton Park were looking very gay, the orangery charming, and the banana grove delightful.

What was to be done? was the question asked when Mr. O'Brian reached home in the evening. He was a public character, and had political interests. Mr. Dashwood was too, and had a certain amount of influence which might, according to circumstances, be used for or against Mr. O'Brian at some critical moment. After a little consideration, the words fell deliberately on Mrs. O'Brian's ears, "Return the call, he may be useful."

Shortly after the occurrence of that little episode, a proposal was made to enlarge the church; the inevitable bazaar was resorted to, to raise funds, and though Mr. Dashwood had conscientious scruples about the matter, he could not make up his mind to prevent his wife entering into an affair in which Mrs. O'Brian, with her usual kindness and generosity, took a prominent part; nor did the conscientious scruples prevent Mr. Dashwood coming forward ultimately to assist others in disposing of the money so improperly raised. Such is life!

Meetings were held which brought people of different grades together; there was a public fête in Morton Park, lectures, and a considerable amount of begging.

One of those heavy thunderstorms which swell the mountain streams and flood the plains, sud-

denly broke over Morton on the day preceding the fête, and Mrs. Dashwood and Mrs. Bright considered it necessary to drive to Morton Park to see what could be done. Mr. O'Brien, of course, decided that it would be proper to consult Mr. Lilleburn, and accordingly he accompanied the ladies to the parsonage.

During this long digression, Mrs. Bright has been left to read the letter which Rose gave to her; a letter which Rose had received that morning from a brother in the country.

"Oh!" said Mrs. Bright, "I have read the first page; am I to go on?"

"Yes, if you like," said Rose, carelessly, and then continued her conversation with Isabelle, who after some time had elapsed raised her eyes from her work, and to her utter astonishment, beheld Mrs. Bright, perfectly motionless, her lips parted as if about to speak, her eyes fixed upon Rose with an expression which Isabelle could make nothing of, and the letter still in her hand, held as if she were reading it.

"Well, I'm sure!" were the words which broke a silence that may have lasted for the space of a minute after Isabelle's attention had been arrested, during which time she remained gazing at Mrs. Bright. Rose looked up.

"What is it, Mrs. Bright?"

"Susan and Jemima!" So Master Alan calls us by our Christian names. Oh, indeed!"

"Does he?" said Rose, blushing deeply as she spoke. "But it is nothing from Alan; he calls everyone by their Christian names to us, it is a foolish habit he has adopted, just for a little fun and mischief. What does he say, what is he writ-

ing about?" added Rose, becoming confused, as she remembered that she had not read the whole of the letter, and the thought occurred to her that though little Mrs. Bright would, in the kindness of her heart, care very little for being so uncere-
moniously called Jemima, Mrs. Dashwood would resent being spoken of as Susan, and regard it as an unpardonable act of presumption.

Mrs. Bright answered by laying down the letter, which Rose hastily snatched up, glanced over the first two pages, but paused at the third. As she slowly read it her colour rose and an expression of pain and annoyance stole over her face; and when she laid it down, she neither looked up nor spoke, but resumed her work as if no one were present. Mrs. Bright watched her intently. Isabelle thought it better to appear unconscious, and tried to talk; started several subjects, failed to get anything but very brief answers, and eventually subsided into silence. Poor Rose stitched away, evidently not thinking of what she was about, and Mrs. Bright, perhaps unconsciously, sat opposite with her eyes fixed upon her. At last she rose, wished Isabelle good morning, walked slowly out of the room, and Rose followed her without speaking. Half an hour elapsed before she returned, just as Isabelle, having completed her task, was putting on her hat previous to leaving.

Rose's usually bright face was still clouded, but she said nothing, except to thank Isabelle warmly for helping her, and Isabelle returned home wondering what Alan Lilleburn could have said about Susan and Jemima.

Edith met her in the garden, in a state of wild delight.

"Finished the training, Edie?"

"Have not begun it. The box has come at last."

"Mrs. Graham's box! I thought the vessel would not be unloaded for another week."

"But it is; and do make haste, Isa, and look at the things."

"Is it opened, then?"

"Yes, and empty. Mamma said something about waiting till you and Harry were at home, but she took pity on me, and everything is all over the dining room."

"What will Mrs. Brown say?" said Isabelle, laughing and quickening her steps.

"Mrs. Brown is as much delighted as I am, in her own way; Mrs. Graham, and Alfred have sent presents to her."

"Are all those books for Harry?"

"Yes; those are from Alfred; and he has sent you these."

"Oh! how could he know so exactly what I should like? Pusey's edition of 'Thomas à Kempis,' and the 'Spiritual Combat,' the 'Lyra Apostolica,' and 'Keble's Christian Year.' Thank you, Alfred."

"And these for me, Isa?" As Edith spoke, she placed gravely before her sister a beautifully illuminated Prayer Book in antique binding, and a handsomely bound copy of "Hymns Ancient and Modern," with the music. "Don't you think Alfred must be very good to think of making such presents?" she said, as Isabelle turned over the leaves of the Prayer Book, fascinated by the beautiful designs and rich colouring.

"I have never had any doubt upon that subject,

Edie ; and his choosing the office of the priesthood proves that he is good. That book will be a study for me."

"I shall be almost afraid to use it."

"Why?"

"Because I may think of its beauty sometimes instead of the prayers."

"You will get used to that ; it is right that you should."

"I don't think I quite understand what you mean, Isa."

"Everything ought to be as beautiful as man can make it—everything I mean, that is connected with the worship of God. That was why all the old churches and cathedrals were made so grand. I daresay those people who adopt the notions of the Puritans in Cromwell's time, and try to have everything plain and ugly, think of the beauty of the carved stone-work and the stained glass windows, when they sometimes enter a cathedral, instead of attending to the service ; but God's house should not be made less beautiful on that account. I think mamma would say that our thoughts must be raised to the same level as the minds of those who planned the building—at least that we should try to raise them to the same height."

"I see now—we must go on higher and higher—reaching to things above us, and getting up to them ; not drag them down to us. My beautiful Prayer Book ! see, how holy the face of that saint is."

"Well, Isa ! how do you like your presents?" said Mrs. Vernon, coming in at that moment.

"I have only seen my books."

"Look at that," exclaimed Edith, opening a morocco case and displaying a gold bracelet, and a simple memorandum pinned to the silk lining of the lid. "Isabelle Vernon, with H. Graham's love." He has sent one to me, and here are Mrs. Graham's presents, pointing to two pieces of pale violet silk and some white chip hats trimmed with a band of velvet to match the dresses. "You don't speak, Isa."

"I was thinking. They are all fresh from England, and they seem to tell us of so many kind thoughts. Is it worth while to live so far away from all we most care for?"

"I have been asking myself that question lately," said Mrs. Vernon.

"Have you really, mamma?"

"Yes. Harry's prospects are not very bright; his salary is not worth staying for."

"I should think not," said Edith, trying on her bracelet. "If you and Harry could live anywhere in England, except at the Hermitage, I should like to go away from Australia directly after Mrs. O'Brian's party."

Mrs. Vernon could not suppress a smile, though her answer was a grave one. "Much as I love our old home, I could be content with a cottage home in England, if it were not for the thought of Harry losing the inheritance of his fathers; and now I see no chance of his redeeming it, if we do stay here."

"Then let us go," said Edith, impetuously. "We could have a nice little cottage at Elmwood, and help Alfred to visit the poor people. Isabelle, you talk to Harry about it."

"What do you think, mamma?" said Isabelle.

"That we will do nothing hastily. Let things

go on as they are a little while longer ; something may occur which will guide us in some measure. For instance, if Harry broached the subject himself and wished to go to England, situated as he now is, I should make no objection ; but I do not wish to urge him to go or stay : so, Edie, you must say nothing about it."

"I believe that will be best," said Isabelle ; and I am almost sure that Harry will soon be tired of what he is doing now and propose some change himself. He was talking to Mr. Percy about it the other day."

"What did he say?"

"His last remark was, that it would not take much to induce him to give up everything here and make the best of a bad business at home."

"Poor Harry ! his thoughts have then already turned in that direction."

"And," continued Isabelle, "Mr. Percy said, 'that is what I would do if I were in your place,' to which Harry answered, that he should think about it. So you see, mamma, it is only waiting, and he will most likely propose the very thing that Edith is wishing for."

"And not you, Isabelle?"

"I hardly know ; I was so fond of papa's home. I feel as if I could not bear to see it in the hands of strangers. It is rather different while Sir John Carleton lives ; but when he dies, his nephew will have it, if he is living, and he is a stranger, and may not care for the old place ; will perhaps try to modernize it."

"Then you would like to live here always, if you cannot live at the Hermitage—you think Australia as good as England, except one spot—one little

bit of it; and you like having Mrs. Dashwood for a neighbour as well as Mrs. Graham?"

"After hearing the question put in that form, Edie, I am obliged to say that I am ready to go when Harry is."

"That is right; then we shall soon be all of the same mind; and another thing, Isa—I do not believe Mr. Percy will stay here if we go. There they are!" said Edith, as she caught sight of Arthur and Harry approaching the house. "I will meet Harry in my new hat."

"How d'you do, Mr. Percy? Harry, the box has arrived."

"And did that come out of it?" he enquired, looking at the hat, which lost none of its simple elegance when placed above Edith's black curls and beaming face.

"Yes; it is just in time for Mrs. O'Brian's party; but this is nothing Harry. Alfred has sent you such a number of books; and there is one packet directed for you, which I am almost sure contains photographs or engravings."

"Views of Elmwood Castle, I expect," said Harry.

"That is what I think. How slowly you are walking, Harry!"

"He is very provoking," said Arthur. "I believe he saw that you were impatient, and slackened his pace purposely."

"I admire your discrimination, Percy. Your movements," turning to Edith, "reminded me so much of a wild colt, that I thought it necessary to pull up myself. Now I shall loosen the reins; catch me, if you can."

He ran through the garden, cleared the verandah



steps at one bound, and disappeared through a French window, followed closely by Edith, who seized upon the packet she especially wished opened, and put it into his hand.

"I thought Mr. Percy came with Harry," said Mrs. Vernon.

"So he did. I left him with you, Edie; what have you done with him?"

"Nothing. You challenged me, and I followed you. I will go and see if Mr. Percy has got farther than the verandah; but do, Harry, be quick and open that parcel before I come back."

"Yes, you must," said Isabelle, as Harry, looking mischievous, was about to lay it down and take up another.

"Well! it would be a pity to check her enjoyment."

"Into each life some rain must fall," said Mrs. Vernon. "We need never raise clouds, Harry. Edith has been enjoying the sunshine all morning; do not cast a shadow now."

"Here we are, Edie! There is Mr. Graham standing under that old arched portico; and that must be Alfred, looking tall and stately, and solemn enough for Hamlet himself."

"The Eagle's nest!" said Isabelle. "Do you remember, Harry?"

"Yes, and the young bird looks fit to live in it."

"He always did," said Edith. "Look, Mr. Percy, this is Mr. Graham's English home."

"A fine old place," replied Arthur.

"Here is a view of the lodge and the gateway. How ancient and respectable it all looks," said Isabelle.

"Must a thing be ancient to be respectable?" enquired Harry.

"No; I did not mean to imply that exactly, though the two things always are almost inseparably connected in my mind."

"I hope you feel flattered, Percy. Antiquity and respectability being inseparably joined together, it follows that you have very little of the latter."

"And you still less, Harry, seeing that you are Mr. Percy's junior by several years. But don't you see what I mean? Those strong towers, and the walls with their battlements and buttresses, the stone window-frames, with their narrow panes of glass, all built to last for centuries, to be the home of the same family generation after generation. You feel differently when you look at and think about such a place to what you do when—"


"When looking at a cottage in Australia, and listening to the singing of the kooyanna," suggested Harry.

"Or when dreaming of cottages in England," said Edith.

"Yes; but in the latter case the difference would not be so great."

"Could *you* be content to live in a cottage in England?" said Harry, turning round so as to look Isabelle in the face. "I thought—" He stopped short.

"That nothing but the old home would do there, Harry? I think I have begun to realize lately that if barriers rise up between us and some special object on which we have been gazing for a long time, it is the wisest plan to turn our thoughts to something else. A cottage in England would be more to my taste than Morton Hall and its imposing colonnade."



"You remind me of Caractacus, Miss Vernon," said Arthur.

"A true Briton and a very respectable character that was," said Harry. "One day, when I was at Eton, I heard a fellow, who thought a great deal of himself, and who was a bit of a bully, to whom I was fag at that time, repeat 'aut Cæsar aut nullus.' I didn't know to what he meant to apply the words and didn't care, but out of opposition, I called out, 'Hurrah for Caractacus.'"

"For which he pulled your ear," said Isabelle. "I remember your asking me, when you came home at Christmas, to look if it were longer than the other."

"Ah! he held it so long, and I struggled so vigorously to get away, that I thought it must have stretched."

Harry took up his books, and glanced at the titles of them as he was talking.

"I wonder if Alfred is afraid of my becoming a heretic; most of these are about the Church."

"I do not suppose that he is afraid of that, but it is evidently the one subject of paramount interest to him, and he knows you can get no books of a certain class here, without ordering them," said Mrs. Vernon. "Besides, Harry, you were such great friends for a short time, and since, letters have prevented the feeling dying out, that, I dare say, he thinks he should like to keep you up to his own mark, in that which interests himself."

"Very likely that was his idea, and I am glad he has sent these books."

"Are there no letters?"


"No. Mrs. Graham said we should find none, when she wrote about the time the box was dispatched."

"That reminds me of the mail; it was sighted off Glenelg early this morning; we shall have our letters to-night."

The door was gently opened a little way and a head appeared, after the fashion prevailing among colonial servants.

"That is the second time Jane has given us a hint that we are in her way," said Isabelle, beginning to clear the table. "She wants to lay the cloth for dinner; come, Edie, and help me to move some of these things."

Mr. Percy's frequent visits at Mrs. Vernon's house were the subject of remark among the inhabitants of Morton. He and Young Vernon appeared to be great friends, certainly, but it was absurd (so said some of the gossips) to suppose that there was not some other reason for such great intimacy. Rose Lilleburn—who often joined them when, on Saturday afternoons, Harry was released early from office duties, and taking Arthur home with him, they took long walks among the hills, or practised archery in the paddock adjoining the house—was often questioned as to which of the Miss Vernon's Mr. Percy was engaged. Rose "did not know, did not think he was engaged to either; he was only an intimate friend of Harry's; he was quite as attentive to her as he was to Isabelle and Edith, and was more attentive to Mrs. Vernon than to anyone else. Mrs. Vernon liked him, and so did all the others." Rose saw that her answers were only received with very doubtful smiles, of which she took no notice, and she was much too sensible and well-bred to repeat any of the comments which she heard to her friends, who were quite unconscious of their doings being the subject



of conversation among the self-constituted "upper ten" of Morton. Had Mrs. Vernon's attention been drawn to the subject, she would have known that Arthur's visits would attract observation; and if he had manifested any preference for either of her daughters, she would have felt very anxious and uncomfortable, being utterly ignorant, as she was, of his family and antecedents; but he was careful, studiously so, Mrs. Vernon thought, on one or two occasions, to convey the impression that he came as Harry's friend; she saw that he was a gentleman, and had every reason to believe that he was high-minded and honourable, and a consistent member of the Church. As such, his companionship was a great advantage and a pleasure to Harry, besides which her own warm generous feelings were enlisted in his favour, owing to the circumstances under which the acquaintance commenced.

"I cannot beat Mr. Percy, mamma," was Edith's remark, as Mrs. Vernon joined the little shooting party late in the afternoon, "nor can Harry. He will have the gentleman's prize, I know."

"You speak as if you were sorry."

"Oh, no! I don't mean that, mamma. I only don't like being beaten myself."

"You ought to be satisfied," said Arthur. "You or Miss Vernon will win the ladies' prize. I have seen some good hits in England, and I shall be surprised if any member of the archery club here beats you."

"But you regard it as a matter of course that *you* should," said Edith, laughing.

"Only because no one could beat me at any of the meetings at home," replied Arthur, carelessly.

"Allow me to carry your bow, Miss Vernon."

When the letters were delivered, Isabelle thought of a conversation at Kooroona, and looked towards Arthur, immediately regretting having done so, for his eyes were at that moment fixed upon her, and she knew instinctively that her glance would remind him of what she thought must be a painful subject.

"Here is the 'Illustrated London News,'" she said. "Will you like to look over it, Mr. Percy?"

He smiled and thanked her.

"Here, Edie, is a letter for you," said Harry, as he opened an envelope, bearing the Oxford post mark. "Well done Alf! this is a long one," as he turned over two or three sheets addressed to himself.

"Nothing for me, mamma?" said Isabelle.


"No; I have one from Mrs. Graham; and this—yes, it is from Sir John."

"Then he must be better."

"I am afraid not; he only writes a few lines, hopes we are all well, and then says, 'Tell Harry to keep up his spirits, to do anything, no matter what; no employment that is honest and honourable can unmake a gentleman. A few years roughing will do him no harm, and he will enjoy life in England all the better by and by. From what I hear he is like his father in everything; and he must never despair for a moment of returning to his father's house. Tell him I say so.'"

"Ah! he does not know; but I like what he says," said Harry.

"About no honourable occupation unmaking a gentleman? That is just what I think," said Mrs. Vernon. "It is what we are, not what the world thinks of us, that we have to care for."



"I hate tinsel of any kind," rejoined Harry.
"Gilding and varnishing are not in my way."

"Nor in mine, Harry: nor roughness either.
I like polishing the real material best."

"I hope you feel that you have had it to work upon during the last few years. Does Sir John write from the Hermitage?"

"No; his note is enclosed with Mrs. Graham's."


"How curious!" exclaimed Isabelle. Do, mamma, read her letter. How did they meet, and where?"

"At Ilfracombe. She says, 'you see from the above that we are enjoying the cool breezes and rocky coast scenery of North Devon. Frank is well—Alfred is working hard at Church history; he says he wants to be quite sure that he is starting right. I am most thankful that he seems to feel nothing less than horror at the rationalism which appears to be spreading in every direction, and has even taken root at Oxford. He has an enthusiastic admiration of Dr. Pusey, and often writes of him. He says one must live in Oxford to realize the benefit which his influence and example have conferred on the University. His great learning, his simple devotion to the Church, and his munificent charities, have caused him to be loved and revered by all who can appreciate what is high and holy; but if I were to attempt to tell you half of what Alfred writes to us, on this and kindred subjects, I should not be able to find room for general news.

"I mentioned to you, in a former letter, the failing health and strength of our vicar. He is better. Dear old man! we hope he will yet live for some years. As soon as Alfred is ordained he can help

him, and it will be a nice beginning for Alfred, to work as a curate where he will some day be vicar. Mr. Greville has been staying with us here for a fortnight, and we must try to keep him for a few weeks longer. We like this place so much that we are in no hurry to leave it.

“And now for a piece of news that will interest you all. We have met with your friend, Sir John Carleton. Frank saw his name one day in the paper among the new arrivals, and called upon him for your sake. Of course they talked about you, and Sir John had the whole history of your Australian life as far as we know it. He seemed to be sorry for Harry's disappointment, and hoped he would soon see some other way than sheep-farming of making a fortune. He evidently feels a deep interest in his welfare. We see him almost every day now. His health is not good, and though I do not think there is any immediate danger of a sudden change for the worse, my own impression is that he will never rally so as to be well again. He spoke anxiously one day about a nephew, who left England several years ago, without leaving any clue behind by which he may be traced. ‘The old story over again, Frank remarked—sowing his wild oats!’ ‘No,’ Sir John said, ‘he was a noble-minded, high-spirited fellow. I only wish he had been my son instead of my nephew; then it would have been all right. It is my own fault that I do not know anything about him; he was right and I was wrong, and we parted.’ Sir John said no more; probably you will understand more of this than we did. I am sure he is very anxious to learn what has become of his nephew. Can he be in either of the Australias?



“‘I have given you these particulars, because it was, I know, only our interest in you that made him so communicative. Frank asked if advertisements had ever been inserted in any of the Australian journals? It appeared to be a fresh idea to Sir John and he eagerly caught at it; so you may see an enquiry for the lost heir before long.’”

“He may turn up in this province,” said Harry.

“That would make no difference to us, if you were thinking that you would like to see him. He would read the advertisement and go home by the next mail.”

“If he had the needful to pay his passage; but the runaway nephew of a baronet in Australia is more likely to be poor than rich. What can such fellows do?”

“What are you doing, Harry?”

“Just what Edith emphatically remarked that my salary would enable me to do, when she first heard the amount, paying for boots and gloves and the omnibus fare; but it is a shame to be talking instead of reading Alfred’s letter.”

Magdalen College, Oxford.

DEAR HARRY,

You ask what first made me think of becoming a priest. The enquiry never suggested itself to my mind till you made it; it brought me to a stand. I think an hour at least must have elapsed before I read another word of your letter, for I laid it down on the table, and, as I often do when I am thinking, began to walk to and fro across my room. I was interrupted at last by Courtney, a young fellow who has rooms under mine, putting his head in at the door and saying, ‘At it as usual, by the set of your face! I knew you were, when I heard you on the tramp again.’ I must

try to break myself of this habit, or it will become confirmed, and be a nuisance to others.

Well, as to your question. The first answer that came into my mind was in a negative form. Worldly motives could not have influenced me, because looking at the subject from that point of view, I shall, if I act consistently, which I mean to try to do, have to give up nearly all that the world cares for, because apart from other reasons, I can see that there will not be time for the work which every priest has to do or to answer for leaving undone, and for the usual routine of a country gentleman's life. The hunting, shooting, archery meets, dinners, balls, and all that sort of thing must be given up to a certain extent, if not entirely.

Again, it could not be because the Church wanted soldiers to fight for her in these days of heresy and infidelity, that I decided upon becoming one of the standard-bearers, for those thoughts came after I had chosen the path I would walk in, provided my father gave his consent. I do not remember that a thought of my mother ever crossed my mind ; if it did, it could only have been a momentary reflection, revealing what was there before, felt and known without being acknowledged ; just as we know that the sun is above us without thinking about it. I must always have felt that my wishes on this subject would be hers. I think *you* will understand what I mean ; and I always feel sorry for those young fellows who speak of their mothers, if they mention them at all, as not being able to understand anything about what is right and proper for young men, and as being a restraint upon them, while all other women, they seem to think, were made for their pleasure and amusement. They think this manly—to me it seems just the reverse. But I am wandering from my subject. When I had thought of all which could not have influenced me, the question was, what had done so, and at last I concluded that the early history of Samuel gave the answer.

I am very glad you asked that question, Harry, for having to answer it has made me think even more seriously than I ever did before of the crowning act—the Ordination. I am often laughed at for reading so hard, but the fact is, I have to do it to satisfy myself. We have, at Oxford, the Catholic party, the Arnold school, in its various phases and developments, and those whose motto is the Bible, and the chief article of their creed the right of private judgment. These

last men own no authority, bow to no decision, recognise the Church as a useful and necessary institution, and nothing more. I suppose the first act of disobedience and presumption, in setting up their own opinion against the Divine authority of the Church, has been the means of blinding them to the danger of their position, for if you ask them on what authority they receive the Bible as the inspired word of God, keep them to the point, and make them acknowledge that it is on the authority of the Church and of the Church only that they do so, they quietly set aside the fact, as if it had nothing to do with them. The fact is, the majority of people don't *think* at all, not as I understand the meaning of the word; they take their opinions from others, and "if the blind lead the blind" we know the result. I am young to express a positive opinion, but I do believe that the Protestant teaching of the last three centuries has closed men's hearts and ears to Catholic doctrine, and has so blinded their judgment, that they cannot see what they are doing in refusing to hear and submit to the infallible, living voice of God in the Church. Rome benefitted by the Reformation far more than England. The exposure of gross abuses and enormities made Rome mend her ways and purify the atmosphere which had nourished them; it drove England, as a nation, to ignore the Catholic doctrines, as well to trample upon the abuses and corruptions with which the world had incrustated them.

I am writing a long letter this time to make up for past deficiencies. What I have said will show you how my time has been employed and account for my silence. I must write a note to Edith, or she will think I am forgetting her, which I never do, or that I do not care so much as I used to do about hearing from her, whereas her letters always remind me so much of herself that they enliven me and my dull room as a stray sunbeam does. By-the-by, we have seen few of those lately; it has been raining for a month. Australia cannot be as *attractive* as England is, or she would surely be favoured more by the clouds than she has been of late.

It is a horrid bore, Harry, that things did not go on as they did at first, so that you could make your fortune and come home. But never mind, something will turn up; I never think of your always living in Australia. Don't either of you go and get married and done for at the antipodes, or

good-bye to England. With that important piece of advice, I shall conclude.

Yours,

ALFRED GRAHAM.

"He is a good old fellow, that's certain," said Harry, as he gave the letter to Isabelle.

"Not quite a year older than yourself, Harry."

"No; but he writes like one much older."

"The result of reading and thinking, I suppose."

"Mamma," said Edith, looking up from her letter, "Alfred says he wishes we could be at home when he is ordained."

"And he says you are not to go and get married in Australia," said Harry.

"Everyone looked up in astonishment, first at Harry and then at Edith, who blushed as she said, 'What do you mean, Harry?'"

"Nothing more than to deliver Alfred's message, which Isabelle will come to by and by. I told you this morning that he looked very grand and stately, and he has sent his commands to us all not to get married. Very good reasons he appears to have for issuing his edict. I shall attend to it."

"Why, of course, Harry, you will. I mean you would not think of such a thing; it would be the same as making up your mind to live here—never to go home again."

"You think I should be 'done for' That is what Alfred says, and I am of the same opinion. What news, Percy? You seem to have hit upon something interesting."

"No," replied Arthur, beginning to turn over the leaves, "I have met with nothing to read," and he relapsed into silence, still holding the paper before him, though, as Harry thought, his mind's

eye was fixed upon some other object. So he let him alone.

On Monday, advertisements for the nephew of Sir John Carleton, baronet, or for information respecting him, were in the Adelaide papers.





CHAPTER XXXI.



O one who has lived for several years in Australia can fail to remember the glorious weather which makes October, in that land of the south, one of the pleasantest months in the year ; and, recollecting the successive weeks and months of almost cloudless sky above, and the dry, warm earth beneath, which follow the rainy season as certainly as frost and snow come with winter in England, they, who have joined in out-door parties in Australia, wonder how such amusements can be thought of in a land where what is now so often called "Queen's weather" is the exception rather than the rule, and where colds and sore throats are the frequent result of days spent among the old ruined castles and abbeys of England.

How English people ever manage to enjoy, as most of them evidently do, the Christmas picnics, with the thermometer indicating a temperature of 90° and upwards in the shade, is a puzzle to many. At that season there is no turf on which they can sit down to rest, and the foliage of the gum tree is so light that, though the shadow of it is a relief to the eye, it affords little or no shelter from the sun's rays. The ground is parched, every green thing except the trees is burnt up ; the handles of the doors, and the fastenings of gates, the panes of glass in the windows,

and the walls of the houses are too hot to touch comfortably, and yet the colonists start off in the morning, to spend the remainder of the day out of doors, as unconcernedly as the aboriginal goes for a day's hunting. And they seem none the worse for it.

The last day of October was the one fixed upon for Mrs. O'Brian's party. It was one of those days—and there are many such in Australia—with which no one could find fault, and that, considering the propensity of most persons to grumble about everything but themselves, is saying a great deal in favour of it.

"How serious you look, Isabelle," said Edith, tying on her hat, and then hunting about for her gloves. "I am feeling as if it were a pleasure just to live and move and breathe. Only look at the brightness and the freshness."

"I was looking at them and thinking of them, and they made me think of what the earth once was, before sin caused thorns and briars to spring up, and of what it will be again when the curse which sin brought upon it will be removed for ever."

Edith joined her sister at the window and looked out, but did not speak. To the right of them were the hills, and the tower of the church partly hidden by trees; in front, a garden sloping down to the edge of a creek; beyond, the village with its neat cottages dotted about among vineyards and fruit trees; to the left, looking over the trees in Morton Park, was the deep sparkling sea.

"Do you know, Edie, I feel sometimes—I do now—as if all this were of no use—waste of time."

"What is waste of time?"

"This visiting. What good does it do,—who will be the better for it when evening comes?"

"Doesn't it do people good to enjoy themselves?" said Edith.

"Yes; but why is it not enjoyment to be doing other things besides amusing themselves?"

Edith looked puzzled; she did not understand why it was, but a feeling had grown up with her that her sister was always right, and she thought she must be now, though she could see no harm in people enjoying themselves according to their own taste.

"Those words, 'All, save the spirit of man, is divine,' came into my mind when I caught sight of all that," said Isabelle, pointing to the scene before them; "and then I thought of the sin and misery that is in the world, and that we are away from it all, except what is in ourselves; and the feeling came over me, that those who have time and the wish to do good to others should think of something else besides amusing themselves. Amusement, when one thinks of it, must be only trifling; enjoyment is different. I believe, Edie, that really good people would enjoy doing what is right more than anything else."

"And other people enjoy amusing themselves," said Edith.

"Yes; it seems to me that those who think don't want to be amused; they find that there is so much to think about, and so much they ought to do, that there is no time for only amusing themselves."

"Had you rather not go to Morton Park, Isa?"

"No, I did not mean that at all. I shall like to go, and I shall really enjoy myself. Perhaps I was wrong in saying it was waste of time. I suppose in everyone's life there are days for gathering flowers and others for work. Our working days have not begun yet; but you, Edie, though you spoke lightly,

must have had some thoughts like mine, when you said, 'let us go and live in a cottage at Elmwood, and then we can help Alfred to visit the poor.'"

"I don't believe I have thought anything about it," said Edith, "but I shall now."

"Are you ready?" said Mrs. Vernon, as she entered the room. "I think it is time we started. I expected one of you to come and see what I was so long about before this."

"We began to talk," said Edith. "We are quite ready. Where is Harry?"

"I heard him whistling in the garden a minute ago,"

"Ah! that is about the right sort of thing," exclaimed Harry, looking at his sisters, as they stood together on the verandah.

"So you like Mrs. Graham's taste in dress, Harry?"

"Yes, that silk stuff looks respectable; but I suppose there is something in the way a thing is made."

"And in the person who wears it," said Edith, looking after Isabelle, who ran in to get a shawl for Mrs. Vernon. "Does not Isabelle look nice? If she had lived hundreds of years ago, when they had tournaments instead of picnics, she would have been chosen the Queen of Beauty."

"Although she has no glass beads and gilt finery and spangles to set her off. I am glad you have had the sense to leave your hair where it was intended to be," said Harry, walking round to see if Edith's long curls had been maltreated.

"How you notice things, Harry."

"Of course I do; so does everyone. Do you think Percy does not know whether your hair is plaited and twisted into some hideous shape or not?"

If you, for the sake of being in the fashion, had done yours up into one of those abominable chignons, I believe I should have stuck one of my arrows through it."

"Suppose it glanced aside, as one did in the new forest! If you missed your mark and the arrow pierced my heart, what then?"

"You would fall a victim to the folly and bad taste of the age."

"Where has Mr. Percy been all the week, Harry? He has not been here since Saturday."

"You will see him to-day, and you can ask him. I have only caught sight of him once, and then he was in a desperate hurry. He said he was very busy; I thought he seemed moody."

"Oh, Harry! that is not like Mr. Percy; something must be wrong."

"Well, we shall see him presently."

Mrs. O'Brian must have been, in early youth, very lovely, her beauty of that character which is best described as fairy-like. She was of diminutive stature, was kind, affable, and courteous; but the dignified reserve which a really lady-like woman always possesses and knows how and when to use, made itself felt whenever colonial ignorance and assumption overstepped due bounds. Then a magic circle seemed to be drawn round Mrs. O'Brian, which those who did not understand what kept them at a distance, could not pass. She had a limited number of friends, but she and Mr. O'Brian had an extensive circle of acquaintances, comprising Honourable Members of the Upper House, and political celebrities of the Lower House, Government officials, and heads of departments, and it was on one of the occasions when a large general party was given at Morton Park,

that the Vernons were first introduced to colonial society. Mrs. Vernon did not wish to be critical, but she could not avoid seeing the difference between the manners and deportment of her own children, and the majority of those by whom they were surrounded. She looked in vain for the retiring graces of maidenhood among the overdressed young ladies of Australia, for the quiet ease and polish which accompanied Harry's free, unconstrained manner, among the scions of colonial aristocracy. She felt that she and her children were met and followed by the broad, open stare of vulgar curiosity, when, soon after their arrival, they joined the Lilleburns, and, leaving the gardens, they walked across the park to stroll about in the orangery until the shooting commenced; and the thought that she had better take them back to England flashed across her mind, and left an impression there which became more fixed as she saw the obtrusive attentions which beset her daughters in the course of the day.

They encountered Mrs. Dashwood.

"Beautiful day, isn't it? I've just been telling Mrs. O'Brien that we must have some picnics before the weather gets too hot. She has got a large party; all sorts of people. Who is to win the ladies' prize? I expect you will, Miss Vernon; you practise so much."

"I shall try for it, Mrs. Dashwood, but I suppose there are several members of the Archery Club here."

"Oh, yes; don't you know any of them? I will introduce you."

"Thank you, we are just going—" Mrs. Vernon began, but Mrs. Dashwood did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence; she caught sight of a party she knew, and raising her voice, said,—

"Mrs. Howell, you have come just in time; allow me to introduce your sister to Miss Vernon. Mrs. Vernon, Mrs. Howell—"

Mrs. Vernon found her hand immediately grasped by a portly looking dame, resplendent with jewellery, who said she was, "'Appy to make Mrs. Vernon's acquaintance."

"Ah! Mrs. Lilleburn," said the "Woman in Chains," by which cognomen Harry ever afterwards distinguished her, "I 'ave not seen you for a hage. Pretty place this might be made. I wonder Mrs. O'Brian does not 'ave a conservatory; I could not hexist without mine."

"I wonder she does not make Mr. O'Brian build a proper house," said Mrs. Dashwood, turning abruptly from Isabelle to whom she was speaking when Mrs. Howell's last remark attracted her attention; "fancy their living in those low rooms! I told Mrs. O'Brian that she might have my housemaid and Thomas to help her servants to wait; I hope they are come."

"Shall we move on?" said Mrs. Vernon, addressing Mrs. Lilleburn.

"Isabelle, Miss Lilleburn is waiting for you."

Isabelle delightedly turned away from the overwhelming expressions of pleasure which flowed unrestrainedly from the lips of Miss Price, who generally carried off one of the prizes at the archery meetings. "She had heard of Miss Vernon's shooting, and was charmed at the idea of having to try her skill with one who knew how to use a bow."

Mrs. Vernon saw, or thought she saw, indications of an intention on the part of Mrs. Dashwood and her friends to join her party, and with a slight move,

which was as polite as it was unmistakable in its character, she left them.

"Are you aware, Mrs. Vernon, that one of the ladies you have just moved to so graciously is the wife of the Hon. the Commissioner of Crown Lands?" said Harry, as soon as they were out of hearing. "I would give a trifle to hear what she will say of you."

"I hope I have given her no cause to comment upon me, but I do not mean to allow the pleasure I anticipate in spending to-day in this lovely spot to be destroyed by people joining us in that unceremonious way."

"Not even Mrs. Crown Lands?"

"Don't be absurd, Harry. I shall ask Mrs. Lilleburn to give you a lecture."

"I would listen to it with pleasure, but Mrs. Lilleburn, is, I believe, quite of my opinion; not that I have expressed any," said Harry, laughing, as Mrs. Lilleburn looked up at him wonderingly; "it was understood."

"How silly it is of Mrs. Dashwood to be always trying to make people believe that she is intimate with Mrs. O'Brian," exclaimed Edith in an undertone to Isabelle, as they and Rose Lilleburn walked on together.

"Very foolish indeed, but she is not aware of it; don't let us talk about her."

"Oh, Isabelle! I must tell you," exclaimed Rose, "Do you remember the day you came to help me to make my muslin dress?"

"Yes, I remember it very well; it is not long ago."

"And you saw me give Mrs. Bright a letter to read?"

"I saw Mrs. Bright looking at you too, after she had read it."

"How did she look?"

"I cannot tell; I could make nothing of the whole affair."

"It was all my fault; I forgot at the moment that I had not read the whole of Alan's letter."

"I supposed so," said Isabelle.

"I wondered, after you were gone, what you thought of me."

"I thought you had placed yourself, or your brother, or Mrs. Bright in an awkward dilemma of some kind. What it was, or whether there was much more serious mischief than Mrs. Dashwood and Mrs. Bright having been spoken of as Susan and Jemima, I had no idea; for no one spoke but myself after the letter was returned to you."

"I did not know what to do," said Rose. "It was the most awkward thing. I had been telling Alan of what we were doing, and of the effects of the thunderstorm, and mentioned that Mrs. Dashwood and Mrs. Bright drove to Morton Park to see whether the fête was to be postponed, and that Mr. O'Brian came to the parsonage with them."

"Well!" said Isabelle, as Rose stopped and looked vexed. "How could that lead to anything awkward?"

"Why, you see Alan notices things, and he commented upon it in his own way. There was no harm in his saying what he did to me, and, of course, he never thought that anyone besides ourselves would see his letter. He said how delighted Susan and Jemima would be to be seen driving through the village with Mr. O'Brian, and made some other jocose remarks. It was dreadful for Mrs. Bright to see it."

"It certainly was awkward. I am sorry for you, Rose; but really I cannot look serious over it as you do. Have you told your brother?"

"Oh, no; I would not have him know that Mrs. Bright is aware of what he said, on any account; he would never feel comfortable in her presence again. It can't be helped now," said Rose, as if dismissing the subject, after having explained to Isabelle what she thought must have appeared strange to her; "but it will be a lesson to me for the future."

Harry joined them, just as Edith exclaimed,—

"I do not see why you should care anything about it, Rose; I think it is rather fortunate that it happened."

"Why?"

"Because it can do no one any harm, and it may do Mrs. Bright good; it *will* do her good if she have as much sense as I think she has. Mrs. Dashwood is another question, and the effect upon her would not trouble me."

"Don't get yourself into trouble by mentioning names among trees," said Harry. "How do you know who may be among them besides yourself?"

"Very well, I will try to remember. "What time is it?"

"Time for us to return to the general company; where did you leave your bows?"

"At the house. Now, Isa! don't let Miss Price win that carved ivory card case."

"She will not if I can help it."

As they approached the house, they saw Arthur Percy talking to Mrs. O'Brian.

"Oh, he has come at last," said Harry, "and he appears to be enjoying himself."

Arthur was standing with his bow in his hand, occasionally addressing Mrs. O'Brian, but with a pre-occupied air that called forth Harry's satirical remark. He did not see them till they were close to him, and then the smile that Isabelle had said reminded her of Sir John Carleton, greeted her as she held out her hand, and Edith exclaimed at the same moment,—

"We have been wondering where you were, Mr. Percy."

"I have been here for the last half-hour and have been occupied in the same way. Where did you contrive to hide yourselves?"

"We have been in the orangery. There! we shall lose Rose, now."

"She seems to be claimed as the special property of at least half a dozen at the same moment," said Harry. "If that is the result of being a general favourite, I shall decidedly object to being one."

"Perhaps there is no danger of your ever having the opportunity of objecting, Harry," and as Edith spoke she moved away to be beyond the reach of his rejoinder, turning her head to look at him, in the mischievous way she often did, when she was at a little distance from him.

Not a few members of the Archery Club looked disappointed when it was announced that Miss Vernon had won the prize for the best gross score, and Edith for the best gold. Isabelle looked pleased and Edith triumphant. She had accidentally overheard Miss Price boasting to some of her own set, that she should win as usual, adding, "I am not afraid of her." *Her* meaning Isabelle, Edith felt sure.

Several bets had been made among the gentlemen



whether Mr. Woodville or Harry Vernon would have the best score. Arthur Percy, who had never joined the Adelaide Club, had made several good hits and stood third. He had taken his aim carelessly, as Harry thought, as if it were a matter of perfect indifference to him whether his arrow struck the target or not. Mr. Woodville's last arrow placed him before Harry, and he looked as he felt, very much delighted, receiving the congratulations of some young ladies near him as a matter of course, and as something he was used to and expected. The prize was his, at least he thought so, and he slightly raised his eyebrows, and smiled as he adjusted his moustache, when Arthur advanced to take his last turn.

"He may as well save himself the trouble," said Mr. Woodville, addressing his sister who was talking to a little man, dressed in the height of fashion.

"I was just thinking so," said Mr. Winter, for it was he; "he is too conceited to do anything well. Look at his off-hand manner, as if it were not worth his while to trouble himself to take aim."

"He knows it is of no use trying, I suspect."

"He looks now as if he were trying in earnest," said Miss Woodville.

There was a momentary pause, an arrow flew through the air, stuck in the centre of the target, and Arthur walked up to Mrs. Vernon, and said, "That part of the programme is ended."

An hour or more had elapsed when Harry, who had been strolling about with Arthur, approached a group of which Isabelle formed one.

"Isa, I want to shew you something."

She turned gladly at the sound of his voice, made a step towards him, hesitated, and looked at Mrs. Lilleburn.

"Pray go, dear ; don't wait for me," she said, and Isabelle moved away with Harry.

"Perhaps I interrupted you," he said, when they had walked on a few yards.

"I am glad you did."

"You were being bored ? I thought you looked like it."

"Did I ? I am sorry for that ; I did not intend to shew it."

"Percy and I have been watching you through that clump of trees for the last ten minutes."

"What for ?" she enquired.

"I can only answer for myself. I thought you looked very much like a fish out of water, so I studied the case, waiting to see the result."

"Which was my looking as I felt, and you making an effort to restore me to my natural element. Thank you."

"Well, I believe I did feel sorry for you ; but just before we caught sight of you we had found the skin of a snake, and it is worth looking at."

It was between three and four feet long, very perfect, of a rich dark brown shaded off to a pale buff colour, and, where the scales were thinner and more delicate, semi-transparent.

"Mamma and Edith would like to see this," said Isabelle.

"Where are they ?"

"I left them in the banana grove, to go to the house with Mrs. Lilleburn ; she was getting so tired."

"And by way of resting you stood talking."

"We could not help it. Everyone knows her, and when one stopped her others came up and began to talk."

"I will go and look for them ; you stay here till I come back."

"Does meeting with this," and Arthur, as he spoke, touched the skin that lay at his feet with his stick, "does meeting with this portend good or evil ? There are various superstitions connected with snakes."

"In none of which Mr. Percy believes."

"No, I cannot plead guilty to being superstitious. I am more inclined to be sceptical on the subject of popular beliefs."

"Then what made you wonder whether meeting with that portended good or evil ?"

"It was only a sudden thought. Whence, how, or why such thoughts come, as they do to everyone, we know no more than we do of the wind. A snake first introduced me to you, and it struck me as strange, just for a moment, that I should be looking at this with you *now*."

There was a stress laid on the word, now, which Isabelle noticed but did not understand. She looked up at him, and, with a smile, said, "I am not sure that it is an agreeable association ; at any rate, it is not very flattering."

"What is not ?"

"That the sight of a snake should remind you of me. The serpent is said to be the most subtle of all creatures ; it was, when under the influence of one, that Eve tempted Adam."

"I have been tempted lately."

"You did not yield, I hope."

"I did."

"Then you must take the consequences, whatever they may be."

"Yes, I am prepared for that."

"You take everything coolly, Mr. Percy."

"Not everything ; you are mistaken ; you do not know what you are saying."

"I believe I do, though I do not pretend to understand others always."

"That is another way of saying that you do not understand me at the present moment. I do not see how you could, as I am not sure that I understand why I have said what I have. How have you enjoyed yourself to-day?" Arthur asked, suddenly changing the conversation.

"I have enjoyed many things very much ; perhaps it is my own fault that I have not enjoyed everything."

"Then living at Morton and seeing something of Australian society does not satisfy you. Am I right in drawing that inference from the few words you have just spoken?"

"You have arrived at a right conclusion, but my words scarcely implied as much."

"Possibly not, apart from everything else. My own observations were the clue to their meaning."

"I am at a loss to understand how you have exercised your powers in that way, as we have scarcely seen you to-day."

"That is no reason why I should not have seen you. But why do you say the fault is in yourself?"

"Because it is. You see, Mr. Percy, mamma is not like other people, and she has taught us to think for ourselves ; she says we ought always to have an opinion of our own, though it may not be right to express it on every occasion."

"She is right ; I honour an independent thinker, and when such an one knows how and when to be silent, and on all fitting occasions has the courage to avow an opinion opposed to the general one,

I always think that such an order of mind commands the consideration of others."

"Mamma always makes one exception, you know. Individual opinions, she says, must not be received by us, as they are by so many, to save the trouble of thinking and judging for ourselves; but the voice of the Church is to be listened to, believed, and obeyed without questioning."

"I think a residence in South Australia would convince anyone who was capable of being convinced on that subject, that the free use of private judgment in theological questions leads to nothing less than heresy and infidelity. I was taught to submit implicitly to the Church, when I was a child, and my judgment, since I have been a man, has confirmed my mother's rule, and my reason has taught me its wisdom."

Both remained silent for a little while. Isabelle was the first to speak.

"It must," she said, "be such a safeguard to feel that one's reason is in subjection to an infallible guide—to feel that it is so by our own free will—not blindly, because then we should not know what we were doing, but—I hardly know how to explain what I mean—"

"I think you mean that the absolute safety consists in reason, based upon faith, bringing reason itself into subjection to the guide given to man during the present dispensation."

"Yes; that is just what I mean. On all other subjects mamma says we ought to think for ourselves, and that if we do not we are burying one of our talents."

"And the use of it has convinced you that for any dissatisfaction you have felt to-day, the fault is your own?"

"Yes; I have no right to expect other people to be like mamma, and Harry, and Mr. and Mrs. Lilleburn."

"Of course not; I should have imagined that you had been prepared for finding them just the reverse. You were acquainted with some of the aristocracy before to-day."

"Yes, with some much more agreeable and better educated persons than I have seen and heard to-day. They may be very well meaning, but it is impossible to like to have anything to do with them. Fancy a great awkward-looking man making a low bow to mamma, and telling her he was glad to have an opportunity of being introduced to her, as he considered her to be a *compliment* to the ladies of South Australia!"

Arthur laughed heartily and Isabelle joined.

"What did the man mean,—what word could he have intended to use?" said Arthur.

"I have not the least idea; I don't suppose he knew himself."

"Oh, yes, he did. These people have 'ideas' the same as Napoleon III. has, only of a different character; the thing is, they never learned how to express them; and some of them have a wonderful talent for remembering words which they met with in books,—they remember the words, but do not know the meaning of them."

"Yet they venture to use them?"

"Yes, without hesitation, as your new acquaintance did. I heard another of your Australian friends talking about a *pellucid* cat one day lately."

"Oh!" exclaimed Isabelle; "do you think he said it seriously?"

"Yes, just as seriously as this other notable,—for

I dare say he is one,—used the word ‘compliment.’ Did you hear his name?”

“It was something like Hatchet.”

“Hackett, I expect.”

“I think it was. Mamma was talking to Mrs. O’Brian, and he came—”

“*Right up* to them with *any quantity* of assurance,” broke in Arthur.

“You do not admire those two expressions, I presume, Mr. Percy.”

“Do you?”

“No; but I am getting so accustomed to hear them, that I do not think about these Americanisms, as Harry calls them, so much as I did three months ago; everyone uses them, even those who speak tolerable English.”

“Yes,” said Arthur, “we have *any quantity* of rain during the winter, and *any quantity* of dust in the summer; everyone goes *right away* for a walk, or *right across* a ball room and *right up* to his partner.”

“Who is this extraordinary linguist, Mr. Hackett? You mentioned his name as if you knew him.”

“He is an M.P.,—one of the orators of the House of Assembly.”

“A training institution of some kind would be useful, I should think,” said Isabelle.

“For our statesmen, do you mean?”

“I was thinking of them.”

“If,” said Arthur, “they have not sufficient common sense to see their unfitness for the position they assume, no training would be of any use. There are some men who by nature are incapable of learning, and those are the men who think most of themselves, and thrust themselves forward whenever

an opportunity presents itself. I should like you, for once, to hear a debate in the House."

"Upper or Lower?"

"Either; they are about on a par as regards learning."

"And you think once would be enough?"

"I expect you would think so, unless you enjoyed the fun of hearing men talking about things of which they obviously know nothing."

"I don't think I could enjoy it. I might be provoked to laugh; but it must be a deplorable sight to see men attempting to legislate for a country who do not know their own language well enough to speak correctly on ordinary subjects."

"It is deplorable, and I see no chance of any improvement; the more ignorant a man is the less he is conscious of any deficiency; but it is just as well not to think about what cannot be altered, though it is annoying to see a promising colony half ruined by a set of men who are innocent of everything which boys in charity schools are taught in the present day, and which many of them would be ashamed of not knowing."

"Harry has found them," said Isabelle, as she caught sight of them through the trees. "There, Mrs. Lofty has stopped them."

"To say something about 'my sister, Lady Arrogate,'" said Arthur.

"I am afraid Australia has made you cynical, Mr. Percy."

"You know Mrs. Lofty, do you not?"

"Oh, yes, we often meet them; we like Mr. Lofty extremely."

"No amount of satire that my manner conveyed, when I repeated the words which are incessantly

being spoken by Mrs. Lofty, could be so severe as that remark."

"How? I did not mean to be severe."

"No, you did not mean to be, but you could not help it."

"I merely said that we all liked Mr. Lofty."

"Exactly; you made a distinct affirmative proposition. According to the rules of logic, that proposition had, in this case, a negative reference. Confess, Miss Vernon; there is but one deduction."

"Well, I suppose you are right, and I am self-convicted according to your shewing. We do like Mr. Lofty better than any other member of the family."

"Most persons do; he is a quiet, kind-hearted, gentlemanly man, as unassuming as the others are the reverse. According to my notions, I never met with anything more insufferably vulgar than Mrs. Lofty's constant reference to 'my sister, Lady Arrogate.' She talks about her sister for the mere pleasure (for I suppose it is a pleasure to her) of saying *Lady Arrogate*. I am surfeited whenever I spend an evening in their company. Miss Lofty is just as bad; it is 'my aunt, Lady Arrogate,' incessantly; and she is such a languishing piece of nonsense, although a paragon of perfection compared to her brother."

"Poor little man!" said Isabelle; "he does not know how foolish his conceit makes him appear; it would be a charity to enlighten him."

"Anyone who made the attempt would be regarded as an enemy and would certainly fail. There are some fortresses which cannot be taken; it is of no use to try to enlighten one who is perfect in his own estimation. I believe that Mr. Arrogate being

knighted for something has done them all infinite harm; they have never got accustomed to the imaginary height to which that act raised him and all connected with him. Titles are scarce in Australia."

"You never visit there, I suppose," said Isabelle.

"Mr. Lofty has invited me to go to his house once or twice, but I have excused myself. In addition to not caring to visit people whom I do not like, I had an impression that Mrs. Lofty would speak of my being admitted to her soirées in the way I have heard her speak of others, as if she had conferred a great favour, and it was an act of condescension on her part to give the invitation, and as I regarded the matter from an opposite point of view I have never entered her house."

"Mamma has accepted an invitation there for to-morrow evening."

"I hope you will enjoy yourselves," said Arthur.

"You think we shall not, Mr. Percy; I shall try to do so."

"Try! would not the trying be in itself sufficient to prevent your doing so, just as trying to go to sleep keeps one awake?"

"We have to live in Australia for the present, and what is the use of not doing what one can to make life pleasant?" said Isabelle.

"And trying to enjoy the society of uncongenial persons is one of the means you propose to adopt towards the attainment of that desirable end?"

"Yes, it is," said Isabelle, gravely; "mamma has talked to us about it."

"And I am sure she is right," replied Arthur, changing his tone. "I mean that, from my knowledge of her, she would decide wisely. I beg your

pardon for being so satirical, but I cannot always resist the temptation to be so when I see or think of the airs these upstart people give themselves."

"You need not apologise to me, Mr. Percy. I suppose it is as bad to feel and think a thing as it is to say it."

Arthur looked at her as she spoke, and felt as many another has done, under similar circumstances, that there is nothing so great as perfect truth. The utterance of what need not be spoken, a fault acknowledged, though it had not been embodied in words, because it had been admitted into the mind and the will assented to it, Arthur felt to be a rarity, and his own mind being of an order that enabled him to understand and appreciate it, he felt an almost irresistible longing to tell her at that moment all she had long been to him; from the moment, as he believed, that he had met her in the forest, she had, though unseen and unknown, exercised an influence over him. "Not now," he said to himself. "I have no right yet; I must wait a little longer; that is not the first step." He mastered his feelings, and replied to her last remark, the words falling from his lips coldly,—

"I am afraid the world would not understand you, Miss Vernon."

"That will not hurt me," she said, simply; "nor make any difference."

Mrs. Vernon and the rest, accompanied by Mrs. Lofty, came up, and while she and Edith were admiring the skin of the snake, Mrs. Lofty addressed Arthur.

Arthur occupied rather a different position in the estimation of those who knew him to what he supposed he did. He was fully aware that the ante-

cedents of most of the colonists were, for reasons best known to themselves, rarely referred to by them ; fathers and grandfathers seldom figure in the background of colonial pictures of fashionable life ; and Arthur knew well that he stood alone, for all the South Australian colonists knew of him he might have "growed," as Topsy supposed that she did. He never alluded to his family or his past life, nor to his present or future prospects. He thought he knew himself, and often wished, as right-minded people always do, that he was better than he knew himself to be ; but he *was* himself, and did not care to be less or more ; what others thought of him was a matter of the utmost indifference. There was, however, that about Arthur Percy which commanded respect, trust, and admiration. Such characters establish their own position wherever they go, quite independently of any collateral or extrinsic circumstances and advantageous connexions ; they may and do excite envy, but that does not really harm anyone but those who give way to so base a feeling ; and, as a rule, the man who, unknown to himself, commands the respect of those by whom he is surrounded, stands far higher in the estimation of others than he does in his own.

"You have astonished Mr. Woodville," said Mrs. Lofty ; "he has been telling my daughter that he never was so much surprised ; he seems to be in a state of great vexation."

"I am sorry ; I hope he will soon recover."

"I don't know how that will be. He does not care about the prize, but the not being first, that is the point."

"He thought he was second to none, I suppose," said Arthur.

"He is inclined to believe that your last was an adventitious hit rather than a skilful one."

"He is welcome to entertain that belief if it is a consolation to him," replied Arthur.

"My sister, Lady Arrogate, told him he ought to challenge you to a trial of skill."

"I am much obliged, but my time is pretty well occupied just now. If Mr. Woodville is anxious himself on the subject, and would like to try to re-establish his position as the first archer in the colony, I will give him an opportunity now; there is no time like the present."

"That would be famous fun," said Harry. "Shall I go and tell him, Percy?"

"Only that I am ready to offer satisfaction for what I have done, if he desire it," replied Percy, with a slightly supercilious smile.

"I understand," said Harry, as he walked quickly away.

"My sister, Lady Arrogate, will be sorry if her suggestion lead to Mr. Woodville's further discomfiture."

"I think you need not fear that," said Arthur.

"Well, certainly, he must have more practice than you. I daresay he would win."

"My impression is that he will not make the attempt, Mrs. Lofty. We shall know in a few minutes."

"Mamma, you look tired," said Isabelle.

"I was thinking that I would go and rest for an hour or two before returning home. Mrs. O'Brian suggested that we should go to the house and take some coffee just before Harry came up."

"A few friends are invited to spend to-morrow evening with us," said Mrs. Lofty, addressing

Arthur, as they walked towards the house, "we shall be happy to see you, Mr. Percy, if you will join us. My sister, Lady Arrogate, is coming."

Arthur bowed. Mrs. Lofty thought he looked pleased and gratified, and continued,

"It is quite an unceremonious affair—arranged in a hurry. Perhaps you know we are getting up a bazaar, and those who are working for it meet at our house to sew in the afternoon, so I thought I would invite a few others to tea that there may be a little amusement in the evening."

"I see," thought Arthur. "Some of the *sans culottes* will be at the needle skirmish—civilities received from them have to be returned in some way without compromising the dignity of Lady Arrogate's sister—the present arrangement is a stroke of genius."

"We shall have music, and probably a little dancing," added Mrs. Lofty, "so come prepared." She had not the most remote idea that her invitation was not accepted.

"Thank you," said Arthur; "music, that is good music, is always a great attraction to me, but"—

"Then you will be gratified to-morrow. The Miss Vernons are coming."

"Arthur had a great horror of being patronised—it was a thing he never submitted to; it was a matter of principle with him to rebel against it, in whatever form it was presented. Mrs. Lofty had held out a temptation to him, but the only effect it produced was a mental anathema on vulgar assumption and all the evils that follow in its train.

"I am sorry not to be able to accept your invitation," he said, with a slight degree of hauteur, which was entirely lost upon Mrs. Lofty.

“ Oh ! you have some other engagement ; that is unfortunate.”

At another time Arthur would probably have felt only amused at Mrs. Lofty's genuine self-deception. He saw that from the level on which she had allowed pride and silliness to place her, she looked down upon almost everyone, and believed that she had only to beckon them and they would be at her feet in a moment ; and as the thought crossed his mind that she was labouring under the erroneous impression that he was regretting having made a previous engagement, he felt ruffled, and replied stiffly,

“ I have not pleaded another engagement.”

Mrs. Lofty understood in a moment how the case stood : he would like to come, but wanted a little pressing.

“ Then you must come, Mr. Percy ; I shall quite expect you.”

“ Pray do not, Mrs. Lofty ; I intend to-morrow evening to look over some papers which have not seen daylight for some years.”

“ Another day will do for that.”

“ It might, but I do not intend that it shall.”

Harry came up, just as Mrs. Vernon, who was a little in advance with her daughters, turned round to make a remark to Mrs. Lofty.

“ I duly informed Mr. Woodville, that it was supposed to be his impression that your last arrow hit the bull's-eye by mistake, that it was further supposed he was desirous of proving that it was by a purely accidental occurrence that he had not won the prize, and that he wished to challenge you to mortal combat.”

“ Oh, Harry !” exclaimed Edith, “ did you say all that ?”

"Of course, I did; and said it seriously too. You are spoiling the effect of my speech by interrupting me. If, I said, such were his desire, you were ready at the present moment to meet him, and would leave it to him to decide whether you should aim at the target or at an orange placed on his head."

There was a general laugh.

"You don't ask what answer was returned."

"I can guess the substance of it," said Arthur.

"He declined the honour."

"He did, for two substantial reasons. In the first place, 'he did not feel inclined for further exertion—he had had shooting enough for to-day; and, in the second place, his skill was too well-known to render it necessary or desirable to have a passage of arms with casual visitors at an amateur match, as one may call it, like that of to-day.'"

"His decision is a wise one," said Arthur; "he might perhaps have wrapped it up better. Objects are seen through transparent materials."

"Are you going in?" said Harry.

"Yes; will you come with us and have a cup of coffee?"

"I think I will. I suppose mamma will be going home soon," Harry said to Isabelle, as she stood aside with him for a moment, to let Mrs. Lofty pass. "Percy, you will not go to Adelaide to-night?"

"I intended to do so, but if you mean to ask me to go home with you, I shall not be able to refuse your invitation as I did Mrs. Lofty's."

"Has she been asking you to the muffin struggle to-morrow?"

"She honoured me by saying she would be happy

to see me, and expected I should go. Her sister, Lady Arrogate, would be there. It was a 'soirée musicale et dansante' that she described to me,—an impromptu affair, got up for the delectation of a sewing party."

"And you have declined going?"

"Yes, I told her I wanted to look over some papers; she looked surprised."

"I should think so; she thought she was conferring a favour upon you."

"But I think differently; and anyone who enters Mrs. Lofty's house to-morrow evening without feeling and asserting a perfect equality with her is to be pitied. Fancy a poor creature writhing for hours under a torrent of polite speeches, uttered in such a way as to make her feel her inferiority, and in the presence of two such magnates as Mrs. Lofty and 'my sister, Lady Arrogate.'"

"She would be in a similar position to Mahomet's coffin," said Harry.

"Exactly,—all faculties suspended,—a fixture between two equal powers of attraction."

It was a calm, still night, and the moon was shining brightly, when Mrs. Vernon reached home, and stood for a few minutes on the verandah, enjoying the quiet beauty of the scene.

"Why so serious, Edie?" she said, laying her hand on Edith's shoulder.

"I was thinking of something Isa said this morning."

"I thought you could not be admiring what lies before us. What was that 'something' which has made your little face look so grave?"

"She said she sometimes felt as if visiting were waste of time; that she liked to go to Morton Park

to-day, but when evening came who would be the better for going?"

"And now evening has come, and the pleasure is over, are you asking yourself the question which she asked in the morning?"

"Yes, mamma."

"And the answer is, what?"

"Not satisfactory."

"What makes it unsatisfactory?" said Harry. "I thought you were enjoying yourself all day; you looked like it, except when that conceited little ape, Lofty, was pestering you with his attentions. Then you looked so disdainful, that if he had a grain more of sense than he has he would have made himself scarce."

"So I have enjoyed myself; but Isabelle's question was, 'who will be the better for going, when evening comes?' I am not," said Edith, bluntly; "are you?" turning to Harry.

"No, I can't say that I am. How does the case stand with you, Percy?"


"Precisely as it does with you."

Both laughed.

"Then it appears that what Isabelle's perceptive faculty enabled her to discern in the morning we have discovered in the evening."

"The 'Voices of the Night' speak very plainly sometimes," said Isabelle.

"To some minds,—to such as Longfellow is gifted with," said Arthur; "but even then circumstances exercise such a powerful influence. How could a man feel the same on leaving a London club room as when standing here, or alone on the sea shore looking at that silvery light upon the waters?"



"He could not," replied Mrs. Vernon. "One must feel differently when looking at such a scene as that, and when one is in the midst of a gay party, where almost all are occupied in watching and criticising each other."

"That seems to be the worst effect of going to parties," said Arthur. "Another is, that it lowers the tone of mind to be continually coming in contact with those who are not, in some way or other, superior to yourself—there is no standing still—you sink imperceptibly to the level of those around you, or you begin to think better of yourself than you ought to do."

"I suppose that is the general effect," rejoined Mrs. Vernon; "but I do not think it ought to be or that it need be. To feel that you are more gifted, and that you have higher aspirations than others, is but realizing that gifts have been bestowed to use for a good purpose; not to make the recipient vain-glorious—but it is very difficult to remember this always."

"Particularly so, when in general society," said Arthur.

"Not only difficult, but a considerable amount of moral courage is requisite in order to act consistently," said Harry. "What is the use of remembering without doing?"

"None at all—that is where one fails; but when you come to think of it, what harm does it do anyone to be voted a bore or a muff by people who do not understand you? for that is the result of acting up to right principles in general society."

"It does no one any harm, of course. We ought to feel rather gratified by such a verdict, considering all things."

"But evil may step in there, Harry," said Mrs. Vernon. "What place does self-complacency occupy among the Christian graces?"

"And there you come to the story of the Pharisee over again. Those old monks must have had a quiet time of it."

"I have sometimes thought," said Mrs. Vernon, when visiting such places as Tintern Abbey or that of Valle Crucis, near Llangollen, "that it was a great privilege to live in such places, surrounded by all that is grand and beautiful in nature as well as in art—away from the turmoil and bustle of the world: time spent in prayer and meditation and good deeds to those who needed help and came to the abbey-gate for it; but I believe that our Blessed Saviour's life on earth would teach the general lesson that the practical life is to be preferred to the contemplative, especially in our days, when there are so many millions of human beings who need teaching and help."

"The contemplative life appears to me to be a more selfish one," said Arthur.

"It does appear to be so, yet I am sure we should, in many cases, be mistaken in so judging of it. Man's duties vary according to circumstances, and during those years of prayer and meditation and separation from all those things, to which you referred when you said the tone of one's mind became lowered by contact with them, the good old men of earlier times transcribed the holy thoughts and rules for wholesome discipline which help and strengthen those, whose duty seems to be work, in this nineteenth century. The treatises of the Spanish Benedictine, Castanisa, and of Laurence Scupoli, could not



have been written in the din of the world's strife and frivolities."

"Harry," said Isabelle, "when you remarked that the old monks had quiet times, did you mean that they were free from temptations, because they lived in seclusion?"

"They were free from the temptations to which most persons are exposed."

"But they would have others which might be quite as dangerous. Would not the absence of evil around them be a great temptation?"

"In what way?"

"Why, it would prevent their knowing their own weakness, Harry, for one thing. How should we know our weakness, in yielding, as we are all constantly doing, to the bad habit of talking about the faults of others, if we were out of the way of seeing and hearing of them?"

"Isabelle is right," said Mrs. Vernon; "they would, under such circumstances, be liable to depend upon a strength which was not tried. Anything that blinds us to a sense of our own individual weakness and sinfulness, is what may be called a negative temptation, more dangerous even than a positive one, because unseen and unsuspected."

"Besides that," said Isabelle, "those who live out of the way of temptation, lose the opportunity of combating it and gaining a victory."

"Then you would rather be on the battle field occasionally than live always in barracks, Isa?"

"It must be best for most persons, because it is ordered so."

"And if," Harry rejoined, "we give way, we are vanquished—if we resist and conquer, self-com-

placency steps in, as mamma shewed just now, and the victory turns to our disadvantage."

"But," said Mrs. Vernon, "self-complacency or vain-glory need not step in. We have only to remember that our strength is just what faith makes it, and no more. Then we overcome, believing that God's grace is enabling us to do so, and every victory gained is a jewel added to our crown."

"You don't altogether approve of monasteries and convents, Mrs. Vernon?" said Arthur.

"I could not say that I disapprove of them. They were noble institutions and holy sanctuaries in old times. You know, Mr. Percy, nothing is perfect here; every imaginable good is abused, and the wheat and the chaff grow together. I would scarcely dare to hazard a positive opinion on the subject. You remember perhaps what Keble says,

'Little they dream, those haughty souls
Whom empires own with bended knee,
What lowly fate their own controls,
Together linked by heaven's decree;'

And then a little farther on he says,

'Think ye the spires that glow so bright
In front of yonder setting sun,
Stand by their own unshaken might?
No—where th' upholding grace is won;
We dare not ask, nor heaven would tell,
But sure from many a hidden dell,
From many a rural nook unthought of there
Rises for that proud world the saints' prevailing prayer.'

"What do we know of the effects of prayer—who can tell what blessings we owe to the prayers of saints in earlier days? I can tell you," Mrs. Vernon continued, after a pause, "what I prefer to the old conventual system—to the practise of those orders

where entire seclusion was the rule, and that is, the societies organized by and under the authority of the Church, whose professed brothers and sisters, bound by vows of obedience to superiors, are working *in* the world. In days when forgetfulness of God is almost universal, no servant of His can be well spared from active work."

"Do you think such a society could be formed here, mamma?" said Edith.

"I am afraid not, from all I have seen and heard. Catholic doctrine is at a discount in South Australia; neither it nor Catholic practices find favour or meet with support and encouragement where they should have both."

"You are right there, Mrs. Vernon," said Arthur. "If your residence in this colony were likely to be permanent, and you commenced the establishment of a sisterhood, if you were not openly opposed, a cool, polite rebuff would check you at every turn, when, as a member of the Church, you applied for advice, or guidance, or assistance, as the case might require, to the quarter from whence you would naturally look for it."

"I am afraid it would be so."

"I know it would," replied Arthur. "And when you were attacked, as you would be, by dissenters within the camp, you would have no protection afforded you. 'Expediency' is the motto in everything. The persons who succeed in South Australia are those who have no principles to stand in the way of anything they find it desirable to attain to; who will make a false statement, and stick to it, or deny it, as will best serve their own ends; who can be smiling and servile when an object is to be gained by being so, while

envy, malice, and revenge, are working within them."

"You are thinking of some special case and person, Mr. Percy."

"I am ; I began generalising, and ended by referring to a case which came under my own knowledge. It is not, however, a solitary one, unhappily for the Church."

"The Church will never be in a better position until her Priests are restricted to the teaching of the Church," replied Mrs. Vernon ; "but we are entering upon a fruitful theme for so late an hour, and must let it stand over for another time."





CHAPTER XXXII.



HE next evening Arthur was alone. He had given orders that he should not be interrupted, and then, recollecting that colonial servants generally do as they like, and rarely attend to orders unless it pleases them to do so, or they "can see the use" of them, he turned the key in the lock to secure what he wished.

On the table before him was a curiously carved ebony box, inlaid with silver, on which were engraved armorial bearings. A scallop shell shewed that one, at least, of an ancient line had been on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and a mural crown told of another having been the first to enter a breach or scale the walls of an enemy's fortress. The silver shield was almost black, and Arthur instinctively took up a glove which happened to be near him, and began to rub it, but the tarnish of years could not be effaced in a moment, and the glove was soon laid down. He touched a small deep part of the carving and the lid flew open. The first thing he looked at was a miniature painting on ivory of a young fair face, the features of which were neither regular nor striking; with the exception of the eyes and finely-formed forehead, there was no beauty but that of expression. And yet it was a face that once seen could not be

soon forgotten,—one of those faces which possess the power of awakening interest and riveting attention, even when one of far greater beauty is near to be compared with it.

Arthur felt the charm, and looked long and steadfastly at his mother's likeness. "Just like her," he murmured to himself. "How well I remember that expression! No one could look at her and not feel that there was something in her very different from the world. How could he resist her, and leave her society for that of,— But he is gone—my poor father! Did he repent at last? I must go home and learn. I ought not to be here now."

He replaced the miniature, almost reverentially, and drew out of another compartment a gold chain and cross. "She wore that the last time I saw her alive;" and again he thought of past scenes. A lock of dark hair and a wedding ring were together in some folds of paper, discoloured by that yellow tinge which time gives. Arthur raised them to his lips, and a tear fell on the paper in which he was replacing them. He did not then look at the rich jewels which were shining as brightly as when worn by their former possessor, but, touching another spring, he let down the front of the box, and disclosed two drawers, out of which he took some letters. They were arranged in order according to the dates, and were written by his mother. As he read one after another, the expression of his face underwent many changes. There were few direct references to his father; occasional allusions were made to her maiden days and early friends, and there were brief notices of passing events; the rest was familiar chat with Arthur about, first, his school life, his college life, into the details and interests

of which she entered in a way that showed Arthur how much more communicative he had been than sons generally are. He pondered for a few minutes, and the mental comment followed,—“Few have mothers like mine. Mrs. Vernon is the most like her of all I have seen, and Harry thinks of her as I used to do of my mother.”

A slip of paper fell out of one of the last letters he opened. He picked it up and read,—“I wish I could be in Oxford on Commemoration Day, but it is impossible. Come here as soon as you can. Your uncle will start for Genoa soon, but he has proposed, since I finished my letter, that we should accompany them to two or three places which your aunt is anxious to see before leaving England, as she says she knows it is quite uncertain when they shall return. I shall like to go if you are with me.”

“Ah!” thought Arthur, “how well I remember that excursion, and my uncle suddenly exclaiming, ‘It is only fifty miles to the Hermitage; I must run across the country and see them for a day.’ I went with him; no one was at home. Strange that those I missed seeing then, I should meet in Australia.”

Arthur had laid aside a few of the letters by themselves; those letters and the miniature he carefully placed in a pocket-book, the others he replaced in the drawers, closed the box, leaned back in his chair, nor moved until someone knocking at the door, after first turning the handle, disturbed his reverie. The next morning he went to Morton.

Mrs. Vernon had returned early from Mrs. Lofty’s party. Isabelle had a headache and declined dancing, though she good-naturedly played for them and sang several songs.

Mrs. Lofty was not aware that true politeness ad-

mits of no forced attentions,—of nothing that would convey a remote idea to the minds of her guests that any constraint was exercised upon their movements. She arranged what she thought must please them, and she expected them to enter fully into everything she proposed for their amusement. She had pressed Isabelle to dance several times in a manner which Mrs. Vernon, who was near to her, thought extremely inconsiderate and even rude, as Isabelle had, when first asked, given, as a reason for declining, what ought to have prevented Mrs. Lofty from asking her to sing, or play while others were dancing.

Mrs. Lofty, however, cared only for the success of her soirée ; or she was labouring under the delusion that the more overwhelming she was in her attentions the more her guests would enjoy themselves, and when it was found that another couple was wanted to make up a set of quadrilles she again urged Isabelle to dance, and concluded by saying, “ You will dance with my nephew.”

It was too much. Isabelle’s first feeling on hearing those words was one of unmingled astonishment, and she raised her eyes and looked at Mrs. Lofty.

“ I shall not dance to-night, Mrs. Lofty,” were the words which fell from Isabelle’s lips. They were proudly and coldly spoken, and were accompanied by a glance which Mrs. Lofty felt if she did not understand.

Isabelle and Edith went to town with Harry the next morning, and Mrs. Vernon was working near one of the windows which commanded a view of the road, when, on looking up, she saw Arthur Percy approaching the house. It was his invariable custom, when he went to Morton, to accompany Harry in the evening, and Mrs. Vernon felt sure that something

unusual must have occurred to bring him there at that time. Could he have come to tell her of some accident? She met him on the verandah, and something unusual in his manner caused her to say,—

“Is anything the matter?”

“Not that I am aware of; nothing more than my presenting myself at this unceremonious hour.”

“That is nothing,” said Mrs. Vernon, looking much relieved. “Isabelle and Edith went to Adelaide with Harry, and when I saw you I foolishly concluded that you were coming to tell me some bad news.”

“I hope not. I have something to tell that will be news to you, and as I have decided to go to England by the next mail; I thought I would come and speak to you this morning.”

“That is a sudden determination.”

“Not quite so sudden as it appears to you. I ought to have gone by the last mail, but I could not make up my mind to do so.”

“I am sorry; Harry will miss you; we all shall,” she added. “I only hope that you have had no bad tidings, and that you are going to something better and more congenial than Australia can give to those who are capable of appreciating the advantages of a residence in England. Will you come in, Mr. Percy?”

He followed her, and as she sat down and resumed her work, he drew out his pocket book, and taking from it the miniature he had placed there the previous evening, he said, as he gave it to her,—

“That is my mother, Mrs. Vernon.”

“I should have known that if you had not told me.”

“Am I, then, so like her?”

"Only the upper part of the face."

"Others have remarked it, but I never could see it myself, and I should have thought that the roughing and bronzing one gets here would have obliterated all resemblance."

"There are some things that outward influences cannot reach," said Mrs. Vernon.

Arthur was still standing. "Will you," he said, after a momentary hesitation, "oblige me by reading those letters?" and laying them on the table, he left the room, and commenced, what Edith called, "his slow march" on the verandah.

The letters which Arthur had selected to shew to Mrs. Vernon were of no special interest or importance. His father was casually referred to in one; another was written during a visit, which appeared to have been a long one, at his uncle's seat on the borders of Wales, which the writer described as the wildest, loveliest spot she had ever seen, and wondered that her brother-in-law could leave it for the sake of living abroad; he said it was so cold; if it were farther south, and sheltered from the easterly winds, as some other place, which I think he called the Hermitage, was, he might live more in England. "So you see, Arthur," the letter went on, "he will probably be off again before winter. I cannot think he is right, unless his health were such as to prevent his living on the family estate, because a rich landed proprietor has so many duties to perform. But I ought not to say this; he is all that is kind and good to everyone, to me more than all; only if you should ever inherit this place, remember, dear Arthur, that I should like you to live here; I think it would be right."

Arthur had stopped his measured walk, and, with

folded arms, was apparently watching the gambols of two young kids in a paddock which lay beyond the garden, but he did not see anything that was before him, nor did he hear Mrs. Vernon's light step. He was roused by feeling a small hand laid upon his arm.

"Mr. Carleton!" was all she said.

"Now you know why I am going to England."

"Yes, oh yes; and I hope you will be in time. It will be such a comfort to Sir John to have you with him; it will brighten the evening of life. It is a pity you have not been with him always."

"Do you blame me?"

"No; few would have done as you did, but few are influenced by the same motives. Your uncle has always done you justice since the first few months of irritation and disappointment."

"My mother formed my character," said Arthur.

There was a long silence, broken, at length, by Mrs. Vernon saying,—

"How strange it all seems! the circumstances attending our parting are as singular as those of our meeting. You should have gone by the last mail; there was time."

"Yes, time; but the will was wanting."

"I do not understand. I can imagine the possibility of business matters compelling you to remain, but the *will* is another thing. *We* have the *will* to go but the *way* is not open at present. You have always appeared to me to have nothing to keep you in Australia, so far as inclination is concerned, any more than we have,—absolutely nothing that you would care to leave."

"I had not till I knew you; that has changed everything. You constantly remind me of my

mother. I have felt at home here ; I have learned what home means. I had been alone so long it was hard to go away."

"But it was to go home," said Mrs. Vernon, trying to smile, for tears were in her eyes.

"It was one I do not know, and might be empty."

Mrs. Vernon could not think of anything else to say at that moment, and Arthur said abruptly,—

"I may as well know my fate at once. Will you give me Isabelle?"

Mrs. Vernon was too much surprised to speak. She had never noticed any particular attentions on Arthur's part ; as her mind took a rapid survey of the past, she fancied that Edith had seemed to be the favourite ; his manner towards Isabelle had sometimes been almost distant, because so deferential."

"I had no idea," she began—

"No," said Arthur, speaking rapidly, "I did not intend that you should have. Had you known my feelings you would have banished me from your house, and you would have been right ; you could not have given your daughter to one who seemed to be without home or kindred ; nor," and Arthur drew himself up proudly, "till I could tell you who the stranger was whom you admitted to your house, would I have asked for her."

"And Isabelle?" said Mrs. Vernon, looking at him earnestly.

"Will be as much surprised as you are. Voluntarily, I have never said or done the smallest thing which would convey an idea that I regarded her with deeper feelings than those a friend may have ; I made it a point of honour with myself."

"I honour and thank you for doing so."

"I do not know," said Arthur, "what chance I

have of being accepted by Miss Vernon ; if she feels for me more than for a friend, I believe she is not aware of it herself ; but this can go on no longer, I must know what my future life is to be. May I speak to her ?”

Mrs. Vernon did not reply immediately ; she walked to the other end of the verandah, stood there for a few moments, and, returning more quickly, she held out her hand to Arthur, and said,—

“I cannot tell you how dear she is to me, but if she loves you, she is yours.”

Arthur did not speak, but he raised Mrs. Vernon’s hand to his lips.

“I acknowledge,” she said, “that without knowing something of your family, I should have hesitated to give the almost unqualified consent I have given ; but it is due to you and to myself to say, that I should have regretted very much there being anything on that score to object to.”

“Thank you for that,” said Arthur, warmly. “You do not place any restrictions upon me as regards time, I hope ; three weeks will soon be gone.”

“No ; delay would do no good.”

“And may I speak to her as Arthur Percy ?”

“You may, if you prefer doing so.”

The afternoon passed quickly away, Mrs. Vernon telling Arthur all she had heard of his family since he had left England, and shewing him the letters she had received from Sir John Carleton, and he talking to her of his mother. They walked together to meet the omnibus.

“Percy !” exclaimed Harry, “what on earth brings you here ? when did you come ?”

“This morning.”

“I do believe you are going to meet Mr. Wood-

ville," said Edith, as Arthur assisted her to descend from a high clumsy vehicle, which an omnibus driver in England would be ashamed to own, "and you came to practice. I wish we had been at home."

"My time has been better employed ; I have been talking to your mamma."

It was the first time Arthur had ever spoken of her except as Mrs. Vernon, and as the more familiar phrase was used unconsciously by him, and fell with no unpleasant sound on her ear, she could not help regarding it as a proof that her heart was ready to welcome him as more than Harry's friend.

"We did not expect to see you and mamma when the omnibus stopped," said Isabelle, as Arthur walked with her a little in advance of the others. "Harry thought we might see you when it started."

"Evening has been my usual time for visiting you. To-day I thought I would come earlier."

"It was fortunate that mamma did not go to town with us, or you would have found no one at home."

"Very fortunate."

He said no more, and Isabelle thought he was in one of those quiet moods in which he occasionally indulged, and walked on in silence.

"What brought Percy here so early in the day?" said Harry.

"He came to tell us some news."

"It must be something out of the common way. What is it?"

"He will tell you himself presently."

Harry looked at his mother's face, but could make nothing of it. Then a sudden thought appeared to strike him, and he glanced at Edith, whose eyes were fixed upon the ground.

"Percy always seems to move in a fixed orbit,"



he said ; " it must be a powerful attraction to make him describe an eccentric divergence of this kind. I am curious to know what it is."

" I thought curiosity was a weakness peculiar to women," said Edith ; " at any rate, you have told me something of that kind, Harry, and now I have caught you ; I have not asked a question."

" Because you would not. I'll answer for it, the evil was in Pandora's box, but you shut the lid in time."

" And you allowed the gordian knot to be cut, and let the cat out of the bag. I have the advantage for

" How long will you hold the vantage ground ?" once."

" I cannot pretend to say ; ' we are all the creatures of circumstances,' as that solemn-looking man remarked just as the omnibus stopped."

It was a warm evening, and as soon as tea was over they adjourned to the verandah, Harry having first placed a lamp close to one of the windows to enable him to read the newspaper. As he unfolded it, he looked at Edith, as he had done once or twice during tea, and she had given him an answering glance.

" What is all that telegraphing about between you two ?" enquired Isabelle.

" Harry, did you hear ? Isa spoke to you."

" Edith thinks she has achieved a victory ; there has been a flourish of trumpets ; she has placed her foot on the neck of her adversary, and is trying to keep it there."

" And Harry is determined to tire me out," said Edith.

Mrs. Vernon laughed. " I believe you would both be glad if I came to the rescue."

Neither of them spoke.

"Can I render any assistance?" enquired Arthur, rousing himself from a reverie.

"You might if the case were stated. Harry wondered what brought you to Morton before the time you generally come; I told him you came to tell us some news, and he and Edith want to know what it is, and are purposely punishing each other by not asking."

"I understand," said Isabelle. "Harry called Edie a little piece of curiosity the other day, and I expect he showed more than she did, and—"

"She raised the trumpet to her lips and sounded a note of triumph immediately," exclaimed Harry.

"Never mind, Harry; I will withdraw my foot; I can afford to be generous."

"Percy, what's the news?" said Harry, quickly, before Edith had time to put the question herself.

"I have decided to go to England by the next mail."

"Well," said Harry, speaking slowly, after a pause of some length, "I was on the point of saying I am sorry; it would be less selfish to congratulate you."

"I suppose you are glad, Mr. Percy," said Edith.

"I should be under ordinary circumstances; now I dislike going so much that I have deferred starting a month longer than I ought to have done."

"Then you have known of this for some time and have not mentioned it?"

There was a slight degree of pique visible in Harry's manner, which Arthur did not appear to notice; he merely said, "It is a sudden decision. I can scarcely realize it; in short, I am *in nubibus* at present, Harry."

"And in about three weeks time you will be gone,

and we shall not see you again, Mr. Percy. I don't like it at all," said Edith.

"Nor I," exclaimed Harry. "What is the use of getting to know people and like them if this sort of thing is to happen?"

Isabelle had not spoken, and Arthur was glad that she had not; he was pleased to hear Edith say she did not like his going, and answered,—

"I should be very sorry to think that we should not meet again; you will go to England sometime, and if you did not it is possible I may come back here."

"Possible, but not probable," said Harry. "Anyhow, I consider that you are a fortunate fellow to be able to go. You do not seem to be half as much elated at the prospect as I should be."

"No; that feeling has not come yet."

"You don't look as if it would come either, Mr. Percy," said Edith, who had been sitting with her eyes fixed upon him, as he stood, with the moonlight falling full upon him, leaning against one of the verandah posts near Isabelle's chair.

Harry looked up, and as the idea occurred to him that there might be some painful circumstances connected with Arthur's return to England, which he had not yet mentioned, or did not wish to speak of, he plunged into a fresh subject.

"You must be prepared, Percy, to answer a few questions, if you fall in with any of the ministers."

"What do you mean?"

"If you go off to the Highlands for some deer-stalking, it would be natural for you, after living in South Australia, to ask how they can spare time for amusement during a parliamentary recess, which question would inevitably bring them down upon

you, and they would want to know why you asked such a question, where you had come from, and where you were brought up !”

“ Well !”

“ Then you would have to confess that you had been living in a land where its legislators were unable to find time for anything but attending to the weighty affairs of the state ; that its vast area contained the enormous population of 260,000, and the people were so difficult to govern, that managing the affairs of Great Britain was nothing compared with the task they had to perform.”

“ What are you driving at ?” asked Arthur.

“ Have you not seen the Chief Secretary’s last ?”

“ No ; is it anything worse than usual ?”

“ Judge for yourself ; it is in to-day’s paper. My attention was called to it in town. He has been opening a new bridge somewhere ; I don’t know where, and it does not matter, but it is over one of our great rivers.”

“ Creeks,” said Edith.

“ Whichever you like, it is all the same thing. Listen to what he says. I need not read his remarks about the immense importance of building bridges and making railways everywhere, because, supposing his little ideas on those subjects to be correct, they are of little consequence,—quite secondary considerations. In a style all his own, and entirely South Australian, he says,—‘ A parliamentary recess in England is popularly supposed to be enjoyed by ministers in quail shooting, hunting, and other amusements, but it is certainly not so spent in South Australia. When you see the bill of fare laid before parliament you will admit that the hunting has been quite a different direction than is generally

imagined. We have a great many measures,—short ones and long ones ; there is the one I have in my mind now, with no less than 395 clauses, and if that measure is not long enough I do not know what is likely to be.' ”

“ There,” said Harry, laying down the paper, “ I will not inflict any more on you ; in fact, I don't know what comes after, for I could get no farther.”

“ You felt you had had enough,” said Percy, laughing.

“ I did ; if that is not more than enough for any mortal man to digest comfortably, I do not, to use the emphatic language of the Chief Secretary, know what is. Oh ! here, Isa, is something you asked me to put in my pocket just as we were starting. I hope it is none the worse for being crushed.”

“ I hope not ; it is for Rose Lilleburn.”

“ I'll run over to the parsonage with it, if you like,” said Harry.

“ Rose will be glad to have it ; she cannot go on with a piece of work she has in hand without it.”

Harry had not gone many steps, when Edith said, “ Stay a moment, while I get my hat, and I will walk with you ; it is such a lovely night.”

“ We shall be back in half an hour, Percy,” Harry called out, as the garden gate closed after them.

Isabelle suddenly started up and walked quickly to that part of the verandah which ran along the side of the house next the road. Everything was so still that she had no difficulty in making herself heard.

“ Edie, try to get Rose to spend to-morrow with us, and give my love to Mr. and Mrs. Lilleburn.”

“ That would be a queer message to send to most persons,” said Harry.

“ Why ; what is there queer about it ? ”

"A young lady sending her love to a gentleman."

"But Mr. Lilleburn is not—"

"Not a gentleman;" as Edith stopped short; "I thought he was."

"He is not like anyone else, I mean; I should never think of sending any other message to him; but, Harry, what a nuisance this is about Mr. Percy!"

"It is a horrid nuisance; the only fellow I care about here."

"And I am sure there is something the matter that he does not like to tell us."

"I expect he has said more to mamma than he has to us; if not, there was no use in his coming here this morning."

"No; I did not think of that. Mamma has been very quiet too, since we came home, as if she were thinking about something."

"I wish we could clear off."

"Harry," exclaimed Edith, stopping suddenly and turning round so as to face him, "Why should not I do something? I can if I try, after all mamma as taught me. We know more than almost anyone else in this colony. I dare say I could get a good salary as a governess, and I don't care what I do if it would help towards going home. Mamma does not speak about it, but I fancy she thinks more."

Harry stood still, as Edith rapidly poured forth what seemed to him to be the expression of some sudden thought; then as they moved on together, he said,—

"I like your spirit, Edie, and it is like yourself. There! I am not in the habit of paying you compliments. It is a new light, however."



"No, Harry, it is not a new idea; I have thought of it many times lately, and I think I did not mention it because I felt that mamma would not like it. I have not even told Isa; but do you think there is any objection?"

"No real one that ought to be allowed to check a spirit of that kind, if carrying out your wishes would further the object you have in view, but it would be a drop in the ocean, as it were. If I cannot see any way to doing better than I am, very soon, I shall ask mamma to go home."

"She would go, Harry, if you wished it."

"I have partly made up my mind to the consequences. If I get a Government appointment at home, it will only give me a salary, but I can see that even if I did make up my mind to wait here till one or two good seasons brought things round again, there would be no chance of redeeming my father's house."

"Then you think, Harry, that anything I can do would be of no use?"

"I do, Edie. Let things go on as they are for a month or two longer, and before Percy gets to the end of his voyage, who knows but that we may be preparing for one?"

"So soon as that?"

"It is only a *perhaps*, you know. The fact is, I have no definite ideas about anything now, and when one is in that state, it strikes me that something generally happens to decide the case for you. I say, Edie, if you had gone out as governess, what would Mrs. Loftly and 'my sister, Lady Arrogate,' say, when it was announced that one who had visited at her house had 'been and gone and done' such a thing?"

"Mrs. Lofty!" and Edith's short, upper lip curled. "What difference could it make to me what such people think? but you are laughing now, Harry. Hark! Rose is at the piano, and there is Mr. Lillburn's white hair, he is in the garden."

Isabelle had remained for a few moments looking after Harry and Edith, and was about to return to her seat when Arthur joined her.

"Miss Vernon, you are the only one who has not expressed some little regret at my approaching departure."

"It is not always necessary to say things; they are understood."

"But we may understand too much or too little, when entire silence is preserved."

"I do not quite understand you, Mr. Percy."

"I might think that my going was a matter of such perfect indifference that you did not think it worth while to speak about it."

"Then you would think what is not the case. You would be unjust to yourself and to me. We have never regarded you as an ordinary acquaintance; how could we?"

"Or," continued Arthur, "you might; that is, I might be vain enough to think, that, because you imagine you ought to be grateful for a slight service rendered years ago, therefore you felt more than you chose to shew."

Isabelle coloured deeply, and was about to speak, when some feeling checked her. She drew up her long white neck and looked very proud. Arthur saw the change.

"You look now," he said, "as if any faint hope I may have ventured to entertain during the last half-hour, that such was the case, were too pre-



sumptuous to deserve even a contradiction in words; but that shall not prevent my telling you that since I have known you every thought of future happiness in this life has centred in you. I am not one to love lightly: beyond the deep affection and reverence I had for my mother, I did not know what love was till I knew you. If you cannot return my love it will make no difference in me; I believe I shall love you always; though, if you reject me, we part now, never to meet again in this world."

Isabelle's head was lowered and her eyelids drooped, but she did not speak. Arthur watched her till the silence became painful. She did not move, the colour had left her cheek, and as she stood in her white dress with the moonlight shining upon her, she looked, but for her dark eyelashes and brown hair, like a marble statue.

"I see," said Arthur, at length; "you are sorry for what has occurred; you could not help it. I will save you the pain of telling me how much you regret it. Will you give me your hand? it will be for the last time."

She stretched it out towards him and he bent down his head and kissed it. As he was about to relinquish it, a thrill of pleasure passed through him, as he felt Isabelle's small fingers close around his own.

"Stay, Mr. Percy, I did not know—I have not thought about this—I had no idea that—"

"That I loved you. Is that what you would say?"

"Yes; and now it is all so sudden."

"Would you rather have time to think; would you prefer not giving a decisive answer now?"

"I could not give that without speaking to mamma, but—"

"But what? If she approved—"

She hesitated for a moment, then raising her eyes, she said,—

"You have told me all; I ought to answer as freely. There are some things we know without thinking; if I did not refuse at once, I must," she paused, but Arthur did not care about losing the remainder of the sentence; he put his arm round her, and said,—

"Now I shall have a home, now I shall not be alone."

"But, mamma!" said Isabelle.

"Mamma has already given her consent. I would not have spoken to you without that."

He was rewarded by feeling a slight pressure of the hand in which hers rested.

"I shall have to go away all the same; I shall be obliged to leave you; but it will be to come back. I must not ask you to go with me, I suppose?"

"Oh, no; that would be impossible."

"I wish I could defer going; but neither you or Mrs. Vernon would let me do so, if I could bring myself to think that I should be justified in staying here."

"You said you ought to have gone by the last mail."

"And now you know why I did not. Do you remember my telling you the day we were at Morton Park, that I had been tempted lately, and yielded?"

"Yes."

"And you told me I must take the consequences. I think I can."

There was a world of happiness expressed in Arthur's face and voice as he spoke.

"But is this all?" said Isabelle.

"No, not all, certainly; but my uncle was not dangerously ill, it was a gradual sinking; persons often last for years in that state, I hope he will. He will be glad to hear of this: your mamma has shewn me some letters of his in which he speaks of you all just as he would if you were already related to him."

"Of whom are you speaking, Mr. Percy?"

"I cannot let you call me Mr. Percy, now."

"I cannot think of you by any other name at present," she replied. "I could not call you what Harry does, and—"

"Arthur is impossible? We shall see. I have called you, Miss Vernon, when speaking to you, for the last time. I can think of you only as Isabelle; my Isabelle."

"But you have not answered my question. I cannot understand of whom you were speaking."

"You know him; you told me once, that I sometimes looked like him."

"You don't mean that you are—are you not Mr. Percy?"

"My name is Percy but I have two others. I am only Mr. Percy in Australia; Carleton is the name by which I am known in my own country."

"And you are really Sir John Carleton's nephew? How glad he will be; you ought to have gone last month."

"Without asking you if you would consent to be Mrs. Carleton?"

"I did not mean that."

"I believe that would have been the result. I

was going on very happily, quietly waiting for some unconscious sign on your part of something like an answering feeling to my own for you, when that advertisement broke the spell. For several days I was wretched ; I had no reason to think you would accept me, and I was afraid, that is the simple truth, of what would come after a refusal, so I foolishly put off the evil day, and the mail left without me."

"And now you must be sorry. Mamma says that is always the result of putting off till to-morrow what you can do to-day."

Arthur did not look sorry, and could find no place for regret of any kind at that moment.

"There are Harry and Edith," exclaimed Arthur, as two figures emerged from the deep shadow of an acacia hedge ; "May I tell them?"

"Now, directly, do you mean?"

"They will find out that something has happened to me," said Arthur. "I don't feel, and probably don't look like the same man they left half-an-hour ago ; besides, I shall not call you Miss Vernon."

"Do as you like," said Isabelle, as she left him to go to Mrs. Vernon.

"Sorry to have been so long away, Percy. Those Lilleburns are nice people, and time slips away without one's being aware of it. We have been there more than an hour."

"Have you? I had no idea you had been more than half that time," said Arthur.

"If we were not missed, it is a pity we came back so soon, Edie."

"Especially as Mr. Percy looks so much more lively than he did when we left him ; the clouds have all cleared off."



"What causes clouds to disappear?" enquired Arthur.

"The wind sometimes; but there can scarcely have been any commotion of the elements to-night. The sun is another cause of their dispersion, but I do not see how that can have risen above the horizon this evening."

"But it has, and a brighter prospect has opened before me than I have ever dreamed of before."

"Well!" said Harry, "when you and Edith drop metaphor, I may be able to comprehend what you are talking about."

"But I don't know myself, Harry, what I am really talking about; I am only answering Mr. Percy's questions."

"And he said, before we started to the parsonage, that he was *in nubibus*. You can tell me, Percy, when you descend and I will listen."

Harry walked to the end of the verandah.

"What has become of mamma?" he enquired.

"I don't know; I have not seen her since you left."

"Nor Isabelle?" exclaimed Edith.

"Yes, Isabelle has only just left the verandah."

Edith looked so utterly bewildered on hearing her sister's name spoken by Arthur, that he could not help smiling; but he became serious in a moment, and taking her hand he said,—

"You look surprised, but she has given me a right to call her Isabelle."

"Then mamma has given her consent," said Harry, speaking deliberately and very gravely. "That was what you came for this morning?"

"It was."

Edith darted into the house. Harry took a few turns on the verandah before he spoke.

"Percy," he said, "if my mother has given her consent she is, of course, satisfied on one point, to which you have never alluded to me. My sister's happiness is the first thing to be thought of; she has lived very much away from the rest of the world; personally, I can only say that you are all we could wish for, and if you stand alone and can give her such a home as she is fitted for, I can welcome you as a brother with my whole heart. I must say what I feel," he added in rather a husky voice, and he walked away to a little distance; then coming back, he went on, "she has not always lived in Australia; her early home was a very different one to this, and at one time I thought we should all go back to it; now there is no chance of it. Sir John Carleton will not live many years even if he should recover now, which is very uncertain, and when he dies, if I have not redeemed the place, of course that nephew of his will have it."

"If I could secure that old home for her?" said Arthur.

"You will not misunderstand me, Percy. It is not money I am thinking of, it is everything, and you must know what I think of yourself. Even the old home, with—" Harry stopped short.

"With sisters and aunts and cousins like the 'upper ten' of the Australias would not be enough. There, Harry, I have helped you. You are quite right, but—"

"I don't like to seem cold, and ungracious," said Harry. "I shall like to have you for a brother, but my sister is very dear to me, and I



have always thought of her as remaining within that circle to which she belongs."

"I understand you, Harry, I should feel the same if I were in your place : but it was the homeless Arthur Percy who was accepted by your sister, and of that I am far prouder than of being the heir of the Carletons."

Harry started.

"Are you indeed Sir John's nephew?"

"Yes ; the lost heir. That advertisement and the state of my uncle's health, which I have learned from the letters you have lately received, have decided my movements. Of course I shall come back as soon as possible, unless you go to England."


Edith's greeting, given with a very bright smile, was,—“I can scarcely believe it all ; such a change in one little hour. You are not even Mr. Percy now.”

“Yes ; Mr. Percy, in Australia. I would not have my own name known upon any account. The fact of my being heir to a baronetcy would subject me to all kinds of unpleasant attentions. The name, Arthur Percy Carleton, as passenger by the mail steamer, will be the first intimation to the public that I am the individual advertised for.”






CHAPTER XXXIII.

“RITING, dear?” said Mrs. Vernon, as she entered her daughter’s room early one morning towards the end of November.

“Yes, mamma ; I want to write a long letter.”

Mrs. Vernon smiled, as, looking at the paper which lay before Edith, she read, “Dear Alfred,” and she remembered a remark she had somewhere seen, that “the dead never grow old,” what they were, when they fell asleep for the last time, that they remain in the memory of those who knew them. The living grow old and Time leaves his traces upon them, but Time works no change on the dead. She thought that, in one sense, it was so with the absent ; any change is, as it were, a thing of the imagination. Alfred and Edith were to each other what they were when they parted ; if either thought of any change, it was but a thought that it must be so, but, not seen, it was not realized. The nearest approach to a recognition of the fact, was Alfred once telling Edith, in a half-joking manner, that her round letters were becoming more pointed, and that she would soon write like a woman. The change from light to graver subjects and higher thoughts had been so imperceptible that neither



noticed it, and if Mrs. Vernon remembered, as she caught sight of the heading of Edith's letter, that she was no longer a child and that Alfred was a young man, she did not remind Edith of the fact. She was too right-minded to be prudish, too natural and independent in her ways of thinking and acting to study the artificial conventionalities of the age ; she would rather have encouraged the open, warm-hearted frankness of the boy and girl than have checked it by a word.

Edith was occupied with her letter for several hours, and when she had finished it she sat thinking for a few minutes, then she slowly folded it and went to the breakfast room, which Mrs. Vernon usually occupied during the morning.

"Mamma, will you read my letter?" she said.

Mrs. Vernon laid down her work.

"You look as if you had been writing a very serious one."

"Only the latter part. I have been telling Alfred that I am going to be confirmed ; he will be a clergyman soon, and I thought of him as one when I was writing. You know, mamma, he thinks so much about the Church and everything belonging to it, and you have taught us to think of it too ; and—" Edith stopped.

"I think I know what you would say, dear. You like to write to Alfred as you would do to me or Isa."

"Yes, that is almost it."

"Not quite?" said Mrs. Vernon.

"No,—yes, I suppose it is on that subject. I never think about talking of some things to anyone else ; I could not even to Arthur."

"You have not known him so long."

"No ; but he will be my brother some time, and yet I never thought of it before. I am almost sure I shall never be able to talk to him as I write to Alfred. It is curious, when one thinks of it," said Edith, meditatively.

"What is curious?"

"Why, you see, mamma, we only knew Mr. and Mrs. Graham and Alfred for a very short time; only saw them, I mean; letters have done all the rest."

"It does occasionally happen that a short personal acquaintance is the foundation of a lasting friendship,—a friendship that time and absence do not check, and where the feeling of regard is strengthened and grows warmer; but such cases are rare, and can only occur where a regular correspondence is kept up, and when truth and candour are prominent traits in the character of those who write to each other."


"And when they think alike," said Edith; "has not that something to do with it, mamma?"

"It has a great deal to do with it, I have no doubt."

"Let me go on with this," said Edith, taking up Mrs. Vernon's work, "while you read my letter."

"As you like, dear; but it is the last. The things will all be ready for us to take to the old woman this evening."

Mrs. Vernon had seen the commencement of Edith's letter, and after reading a few general remarks, and one to the effect that Harry had told her to leave him something to write about, and that she would not, therefore, tell him anything about the Mr. Percy who had been mentioned in a former letter; she was not a little amused to see how



naturally and unconsciously Edith glided into the subject, and wrote of Arthur as a young sister might speak of a brother older than herself to one who was her own particular favourite in the family.

Then she continued,—“ We had such a delightful evening among the hills two days ago. A moonlight picnic was arranged, and it was the nicest party we have been at. I enjoyed everything, but I believe it was the moon and the hills and the pleasant evening after a very hot day that made me feel as if I were in fairy-land. We started a little while before the sun set, and when we had scrambled down to the bed of the creek, which we crossed on stepping-stones, there were the long shadows of the old gum trees and the hills making the bright spots look still brighter by the contrast. On one large tree was a black man's ladder. I can't understand how they can climb those tall, straight, smooth-barked trees, merely by making those shallow notches, and how they manage to cling to the trunk while they are cutting with a sharp stone the notch above them. We unpacked our baskets, and spread them out on a white cloth in the prettiest spot we could find ; Harry helped to gather sticks to light a fire, and Arthur fetched water from the creek to make the tea. It was great fun ; I wish you had been there. Arthur said afterwards it was the pleasantest evening he had ever spent, except,—and then he said something to Isa which I did not hear. Poor Arthur ! since his mother died he has had no home, and no one to love, and no one, as he thought, to care for him ; he did not know how much his uncle was wishing to have him at home ; and you can't think how very happy he is now. I am sorry he has to go away so soon. But I was

telling you about the picnic. As the sun went down the moon rose, and one after another the stars appeared. Mamma says there are no such nights in England; I could see to read small print quite well. After tea we sang glees, and amused ourselves in different ways till about ten o'clock. It was my last party for at least six weeks,—*ours* I ought to have said,—for Isabelle says she will not go out without me, and mamma says she only goes to take us.

“At last I can be confirmed, and we shall have no visiting till after that. Mamma has laid down some rules for me, and I am very glad she has, for I am beginning to see that people who live without rule are always forgetting or neglecting something, and seem to have nothing to do one hour and the next are in an uncomfortable hurry. It is so different with mamma; when she is doing nothing she is resting. You will hardly understand all I mean by that, indeed, I ought not to have said when she is doing nothing, for that is a thing that never happens. When she has quietly done all that ought to be done in the course of the day, she reads or talks to us, or *thinks*; and, Alfred, I have found out that what you said to me, in a letter more than a year ago, is quite true,—that thinking is sometimes very hard work. I asked mamma one day what she thought about it, and she said that *thinking*, in the way you meant, was often harder work than *doing*; so I knew what she meant when, after the Bishop gave notice of the Confirmation, she said to me, ‘Now, Edie, you must think well of what you are about to do.’ In addition to the general preparation and Mr. Lilleburn’s examination, mamma has set apart one hour every day for

special reading and meditation, and two hours on Wednesdays and Fridays. I hope I shall be able to remember to do what I ought, but it is so difficult not to forget often, and then, when you get into a wrong road, it is not easy to turn back, at least, it is not easy for me ; and I talked to Isa about it, and she said it was not for anyone ; that it seemed as if we were continually on a slippery hill side, and if we did not watch carefully every step we take we are liable to fall. When I read the Confirmation Service, and saw what questions the Bishop would ask and I must answer, I thought of the hill side, and that that ordinance of the Church was some distance up the hill. Then the thought came that my vows would either help me to go higher, or if I fell, that they would be like a heavy weight upon me, and bear me down and perhaps crush me. I felt afraid, till I remembered that grace and strength were promised to all who were obedient, and then I saw that all I had to do was to obey the commands of the Church. Mamma has lately given me a small picture, which I look at every night and morning. I think it helps me to keep right. There is a high, rugged mountain, on the top of which stands our Saviour with a glory round Him. The ascent of the mountain is represented as difficult, in some places almost impracticable from the steepness and the roughness, and pilgrims bearing crosses are climbing up. The crosses are of different sizes, some so large and heavy that the bearers are bending under their weight ; one is on his knees, yet they are all advancing, there is no turning back nor standing still ; those who are nearest the top seem to be stronger, and to bear their crosses without much difficulty ; they stand upright, and one has

his head raised and is looking upward. That figure reminds me of 'Excelsior.' At the foot of the mountain is written, 'Courage ! La croix conduit au ciel ;' and at the back of the picture, 'La voie de la croix conduit au ciel. Rien ne nous est plus profitable que les afflictions. Les peines et les travaux que nous semons ici-bas produiront dans le ciel, notre véritable patrie, une moisson abondante. Le chrétien s'affermir par ses épreuves. La main de Dieu, qui nous châtie, nous protégera au jour du Jugement.'

"I think I shall learn many lessons from looking at my picture. How many you must learn in the galleries at Oxford ! Since you have told us of what you mean to do, I have sometimes fancied you carrying 'that banner with the strange device,' and have thought how much I should like to hear the 'clarion voice.' No matter how 'far up the height,' dear Mrs. Graham would say, so that it fell not from the sky 'like a falling star.' You said, when you last wrote, that you would like us to be in England when you are 'ordained. I expect Harry will tell you that we should like it too, but that is all we can say at present, except that no one ever speaks or acts as if we were going to stay here long, and so I feel that we may go at any time. Harry talks of being in a transition state ; mamma says changes must come ; Isabelle has made the first decided move, and it is only waiting a little while to see what will happen next. If fortune should point to the words, 'Westward Ho !' we should not hesitate to obey the signal.

"There is one thing we shall all regret whenever we leave Australia, and that is, not having been able to do more for the aborigines. We have

thought about it, and talked the matter over, and each time mamma seemed to be more puzzled, and to see fresh difficulties in the way of effecting any permanent good until Government recognises its responsibility, and that, Harry says, will never be, because—; but I will not tell you now what he said; it was very severe, though true. I read a chapter in the 'Imitation of Christ' every day, and this morning it was on the subject of avoiding superfluity in words. I am afraid that is a very hard lesson to learn and remember."

Mrs. Vernon's comment on Edith's letter was not in words; she merely kissed her as she looked up from her work, and Edith was satisfied. Neither spoke for some time, then Edith said,—

"After I had written what I have about the poor black people, the thought came into my mind that, if the colonists were different, they would be able to make the Government do more for the natives."

"There is no doubt of that; the misfortune is, that the fearful abuse of private judgment on the highest of all subjects has completely disorganised society; everyone does what is right in his own eyes, all strive for the lion's share of power; there is and can be no unity of purpose or action, therefore, everything is a failure. A few efforts are partially successful, but I see in them none of the elements of lasting and extensive good. For anything to succeed there must be the talent and power to guide and govern on one hand, and submission and humility on the other."

"It seems so strange, mamma, that those people

who cause divisions all profess to be guided by the same book—the Bible."

"Is it strange? I think not; it is just what we might expect, what must be, indeed. The Bible is not a book to be read carelessly by everyone; it needs an interpreter, and that interpreter has been appointed by God. Everyone who opens the sacred volume to form his own creed, instead of receiving that which the Church has always held, and then, in obedience to authority, reading it in a humble frame of mind for further confirmation of the Faith and for edification, is almost certain to be led into the deadly sin of schism."

"I suppose," said Edith, "they do not know what they are doing. If they could only see what would follow the first step!"

"What would you call that first step, Edie, if you had to give it a name?"

"Would it be pride?" said Edith, after some hesitation, "or self-conceit?"

"Neither, I think," replied Mrs. Vernon, "though they would be close at hand."

"Then it must be disobedience."

"Yes. I met with a beautiful passage on obedience in a book I was reading yesterday. Give it me, dear; that large one in a dark cover on the shelf behind you."

Mrs. Vernon turned over a few leaves and read,—"'To fulfil His commands is to unlock His mysteries and to enter into His kingdom, and the treasures of secret places. The difficulties in His written Word are but the intricate wards and involutions of the lock, of which obedience is the key, turning it with ease; it has some exquisite correspondence with every winding, and adapta-

tion to every part; while without this key no skill and no force can avail."*

"Do you remember a remark you made about the Church the evening of Mrs. O'Brian's party?" said Edith.

"I recollect that something was said on the subject, but I do not at this moment know to what you refer in particular."

"You said that 'the Church will never be in a better position until her priests are restricted to the teaching of the Church.' Something that Isa was saying a few days afterwards reminded Arthur of it, and he said that the priests being allowed so much latitude was not the only evil of a similar kind, though, of course, less in degree, that was tolerated in the Church here; and then he referred to the lay-readers."

"What did he say?"

"That it was a very objectionable arrangement and was calculated to injure the Church seriously, unless more stringent regulations were made and enforced. I believe I have given you his exact words"

"Very likely," said Mrs. Vernon; "they do not seem to be quite your own; but I know that licensed lay-readers are obliged to be communicants, and are bound by a solemn vow not to read anything contrary to the doctrine of the Church."

"Then," said Edith, "that only makes what Arthur told us appear still worse. When he was on Grant's Peninsula there was no resident clergyman. One of the regular lay-readers had been a Wes-

* The Gospel Narrative of our Lord's Resurrection Harmonised : with Reflections. By the Rev. Isaac Williams, B.D.

layan preacher, and even at the time that he was reading the Services of the Church, he used to go sometimes to one or other of the dissenting chapels. This man, he was told, wrote some of the sermons he read, and Arthur has seen him, more than once, place his books or his hat and his spectacles on the Communion Table, just as if it were one for ordinary uses."

"Was he licensed by the bishop?"

"Arthur was not sure about that; but there was another lay-reader who was licensed, who used to read anything he liked. Sometimes Arthur has heard him read what he thought were intended for cottage essays, written by a Scotch Presbyterian, and he overheard a member of the congregation telling him one day on leaving the Church, that he would get into trouble if he read what was contrary to the teaching of the Church."

"I cannot imagine anything worse than the state of Church discipline in this colony," said Mrs. Vernon. "In fact there seems to be none; better close the churches than have dissenters reading, or dissenting sermons read in them. Besides the remedy is so easy. If ignorant men, ignorant I mean of Church doctrine, choose to offer their services and ask the bishop to license them, they might be guarded against openly breaking the vows they take by having sermons provided for them, chosen by the bishop."

"Yes, Arthur, said something like that; but, instead, each lay-reader in the colony is left to choose any sermons he likes best."

"And reads them, I am afraid," said Mrs. Vernon, "without knowing whether they contain Church doctrine or not; but, dear, it does no good

for us to talk about these things, unless the talking would mend matters."

"Arthur thinks such abuses ought to be publicly noticed. He says the evil has been going on ever since he has been in the colony, and that some one ought to denounce it."

"It would be a painful task, and yet perhaps he is right; no member of the Church would *like* to do it, but if one realized it as a great evil, a plague-spot that was spreading, and needed some powerful, active treatment, it would be cowardly and sinful to remain silent."

"I think, mamma, from what Arthur said, that he would have done something if he had ever been settled for long in any one district, and if he had been older."

"Ah! that is another consideration. An important step taken by a wrong person may do harm in almost any case, and in this particular one, no motive but the very highest, and an earnest wish to do something however little and insignificant it may be, to check the evil, would justify any public notice of it. As to the injury such a course does to the Church, there cannot be two opinions, as it reduces the Church in each locality where the abuse is tolerated, to the level of a sectarian chapel."

"Are you giving Edith a lesson on the dangers of dissent?" said Arthur, who appeared at the window as the last words were uttered.

"Not exactly. She has been telling me what you said on the subject of lay-readers."

"And what is your conclusion?"

"That unless something can be done that will effectually put a stop to the reading of sermons or

essays written by those in separation from the Church, the services conducted by laymen had better be discontinued."

"That is my opinion. It is, no doubt, very difficult in a newly-settled country where the inhabited districts are so far apart and priests are so few in number, to restrain abuses; still the fact remains that such a case as the one you have referred to, would not occur a second time, if, by some extraordinary chance, it happened once, in the Roman communion, therefore it need not in the Anglican."

"I see that," said Mrs. Vernon.

"There is no doubt," continued Arthur, "that the governing powers of the Church are to blame in the first instance. The choice of sermons is left to individuals, who may or may not know what doctrines the Church holds, instead of approved and orthodox books being provided. If that were done, and each lay-reader solemnly pledged to read only from those books, it would, I believe, go a long way towards remedying the evil; because that pledge would be simple enough for every one to understand; whereas, when a lay-reader takes a solemn vow to read nothing but what is in accordance with the doctrine of the Church, without knowing what that doctrine is, and then is left to choose the sermons he shall read, the result must be just what it is."

"I don't envy the governing powers of the Church in this colony," said Mrs. Vernon; "they have a difficult task to perform."

"You mean in governing people utterly destitute of all reverence for and submission to authority," said Arthur.

"Yes; I can conceive nothing more trying and difficult."

"And the difficulty is increased tenfold by every act of expediency which prevents lawful authority being felt and obeyed."

"I agree with you there. I remember Mr. Graham saying that if nothing short of the teaching of the Prayer Book were permitted, and Church discipline was strictly enforced, and if in consequence of that being done, the bishop lost half of his priests, the Church would be the gainer."

"Mr. Graham is not the only one in the colony who has arrived at that conclusion, and the same may be said of every diocese in England."

"It will not only be said, but felt and acted upon before many years are gone by," rejoined Mrs. Vernon. "The words, 'Awake, thou that sleepest,' have been spoken, and in the Church England slumbers no longer; she is putting on her strength."

"*Has been* during the last thirty years, according to what I have heard and read," said Arthur. "She is making that strength felt now. There is no surer sign of strength and success than the redoubled assaults of enemies. The only foes she need dread are those, who, like Judas, eat at her table, and while doing so, betray her best interests."

"She has the promise to rest upon, they cannot prevail against her," said Mrs. Vernon. "Many will go out from her, in the days that seem to be rapidly approaching, but their places will be filled. I have no fear for her."

"Ridicule appears to be the favourite weapon

employed both by Rome and Geneva," said Arthur; "they are agreed upon that point."

"Not for the first time in history. Ridicule is a keen-edged weapon—"

"So," said Edith, "was Saladin's scimitar."

"Very well put in, Edie; it divided the soft, luxurious cushion, but it was powerless to injure the shield of strength."

"Besides," said Arthur, "ridicule is an unworthy weapon."

"Generally used by those who have no better," added Mrs. Vernon. "Nothing is a plainer proof, to my mind, that the Catholics of England are right in the position they have taken, than the attitude of calm dignity they maintain. Their work is enough for them; they have neither time nor inclination to attack others; and they seem to me to have taken for their motto, 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.'"

"They certainly are not afraid of man. So that the truth is preached and taught they care very little comparatively about anything else. They speak out fearlessly and keep nothing back."

"No easy task at the present time," said Mrs. Vernon. "To teach the whole truth, is, in these days, certain to bring upon a man the scorn of the ignorant and the worldly; nor is that the worst. The great mass of mankind knows so little of Catholic doctrine, entertains such partial views, and most of those who are accounted religious, who are zealous and anxious to do what is right, are so exclusively addicted to some school of religious teaching, founded by Calvin or other heterodox expositors of the Faith, that one who sets forth clearly the whole truth is certain to offend



and startle some whom he would rather win over to the old paths."

"Where are the old paths in Australia?" said Arthur.

"Very indistinctly marked out, as they have been in England for several centuries. You will see all the old land-marks plainly, when you get home."

"When I get home!" exclaimed Arthur. "Home seems to me to be where I have chiefly lived during the last three weeks."

What those weeks were to Arthur no one can tell who has not been similarly situated. There was the true, warm welcome, a pure loving atmosphere to breath, kind words and smiles, and the knowledge of being first with one who was and always would be to him, what God intended that every man's wife should be. Woman was designed to be man's companion, neither a household drudge nor a fashionable drawing-room nonentity. In the present day the great majority seem to have missed their vocation, and to have lost sight of the true position they were intended to occupy in the scale of creation. Till that is recognised, woman will not be in her own place; she will strive to be above it, or she will sink below it. An inferior cannot be a companion in the full sense of the word, therefore when it is admitted that woman is inferior to man in mental power, as she is in bodily strength, we must enquire in what way that inferiority is compensated for; and it will be found that the want of power is supplied by that influence which a quick perception, acute feeling, ready tact, and facility of adaptation give to woman. If she knows how to use those faculties wisely and well,

and has learned the secret of governing herself, her influence effects as great results as man's superior power ¹does. Almost everything now-a-days is more artificial than natural, and perhaps it is not too much to say, that one would have to search long and diligently in the ranks of the educated classes, before he would meet with many women who would feel and appear just what they were in the drawing-room of their sovereign, and be, if circumstances required it, the working power as well as the mainspring of their own households ; and yet all women would be something like that if they were natural instead of artificial. Perhaps few would venture to assert that the present state of society is right or desirable in any sense. Men and women are not what God would have them be, but what the world makes them. It is not manly, far less Christian, to rejoice and glory in being independent of home. A strong, true, loving heart would not break a single silken thread that bound him there. It is not womanly to seek and find pleasure in shining more in the gay assembly than in her own home. God made families to live together, and being together, to be strong ; the several members of each to love, care for, and support each other, and by that united strength, as by the powers of gravitation and cohesion to bind and keep society together within due bounds ; but now the world has divided them ; the theatre, the race course, the gaming table are the world's baits for man ; smoking and drinking the occupations of his lighter moments ; the follies of fashion and opportunities of play occupy the time of woman ; the children even up to the care of those who perform duties and fulfil their tasks because they are

paid for doing certain work, not from affection ; the little loving heart is crushed and its freshness blighted,—its clinging tenderness and yearning towards those who should cherish and strengthen it, are checked, if not rudely turned into some other channel : members of families are scattered particles, and, in this age of the world's boasted greatness, each has a separate interest, and they glory in that which constitutes their weakness.





CHAPTER XXXIV.



It was the 24th of May, and as Lady Digby entered the brilliantly-lighted rooms of Government House and thought of the throng of persons that would soon fill them, a smile passed over her face.

The principal hall, which separated the ball room from the drawing rooms, had been converted into a billiard room for the evening, and the smaller hall at the east end of the building was decorated with flags and evergreens. It was the evening of the "Queen's Ball," on which occasion everyone, who can by any means obtain an invitation, flocks to Government House, professedly to celebrate Her Majesty's birthday. Perhaps it was a passing thought of the various characters that would shortly be assembled in those rooms, which made the courteous and gentle, yet dignified Lady Digby smile, and then look grave. Honourables of the Upper House, the Consuls of different nations, Military Officers, Heads of Departments and their subordinates, Members of the House of Assembly, with their wives, daughters, cousins, and friends, form a motley assemblage such as may possibly only be met with in colonies peopled as the Australias are. No foreign language greets the ear, except German, but those who are curious in the dialects of the dif-

ferent English counties, as spoken by those who have had few opportunities of reducing them to polite English, would be amply rewarded for the trouble of wandering about for a few hours among the crowd that is to be met at Government House on the Queen's birthday; and a physiognomist would be well rewarded in his laudable endeavours to look into the mind of the actors in that particular scene of the drama of life, by watching its index. He would see the wife of a professional man looking daggers at the worthy spouse of one from whom she had purchased her gloves the day before, for presuming to take a seat on the same sofa; or the daughter of a colonial "Honourable" glancing indignantly at the meek, quiet looking girl, the child of some wandering Arab, who is *only a poor gentleman*, because she happens to be her *vis-a-vis* in the dance.

A student of Lavater, who, on hearing professional men mentioned, thought of the three learned professions, would be strangely puzzled, on scanning the faces of professional men in Australia, to assign them a place among the ranks of either. Everyone who has a room, which he designates an office, brokers, accountants, horse doctors, are all professional magnates; and shopkeepers, who may be right in thinking that they are occupying as high a level and are quite as respectable, shew their weakness by following a bad example; hence a chemist's shop is called a "Medical Hall," a general store is an "Emporium," a school an "Establishment," a tobacco shop a "Divan," and so, an uninitiated Arab may on certain fête days imagine that he is in the august presence of very great people, and on becoming more enlightened by hearing persons and

things called by their right names, will retire to his chamber and meditate on the history of Cinderella.

The rooms were rapidly filling, and the eyes of the Governor-in-Chief and Lady Digby had been fairly dazzled by a group, the principal figure of which looked like a full-blown peony, and two younger ones like tulips of varied colours, when Mrs. Vernon was announced. The peony fluttered and rustled, every petal seemed to be in motion as if agitated by some unusual phenomenon, and the tulips, stiff and gaudy, looked as if they could not bend.

When Lady Digby's eye rested on Mrs. Vernon, she felt, what she afterwards expressed by repeating an old adage, "After a storm, a calm." If Mrs. Vernon felt proud of her son, on whose arm she leaned, he was no less so of her. It was the first time since her husband's death that she had gone to a large evening party. A black velvet dress which had been worn but once in more prosperous days, had been drawn out of its obscure corner and remodelled ; a diamond brooch and a star of brilliants which fastened a small Mary Stuart cap to her dark hair, were the only ornaments she wore, and she and her daughters, in their white muslin dresses and coral necklaces and bracelets, formed an agreeable contrast to most of those by whom they were soon surrounded. When Mrs. Vernon received the invitation card for the ball, her first thought was to decline going. They were only waiting to hear from Arthur before positively deciding when and by which route to return to England, and she did not wish to introduce her children to general society in Australia. Harry, however, was very anxious to go ; Edith said she should like it, and Isabelle thought she should, so

Mrs. Vernon altered her intentions, and did not regret having done so when she saw how thoroughly the young people enjoyed dancing.

Mrs. Vernon had, on settling at Morton for a time, taken up a neutral and independent position as regarded visiting. She sought the acquaintance of no one ; she received and returned politely and with hearty goodwill the attentions of those who called upon her, without making any enquiries about their antecedents or asking who they visited. The different "sets" in the colony were all one to her, and she was quite ignorant of the offence she gave to some of those who had left their cards at her cottage, by admitting others whom they considered it *infra dig* to recognise in public, though in the comparative retirement of Morton, they graciously shook hands with the "*sans-culottes*." She did not know how, in the estimation of these people, she had compromised herself, and, what was far worse and quite unpardonable, had in some measure compromised those who had condescended to visit her. Mrs. Vernon was innocent in intention, but the enormity she had committed must be visited upon her in some form, or the barriers which the "upper ten," had raised with such persevering diligence would be swept away. It was therefore decided that Mrs. Vernon must be tabooed, which means among ladies of the particular class to which our narration obliges us to refer, that she should be allowed on all occasions to make herself generally useful ; that she should be enthusiastically greeted at school festivals, charity meetings, and assemblages of that kind, but at others she must be kept at a proper distance, and be debarred the privilege of admittance to all select réunions.

Mrs. Vernon's serious delinquencies and democratic proclivities began to be the subject of general remark before she had resided two months at Morton. Without having any other reason than the simple one that no one in Australia had any interest in them or in their affairs, they had decided upon saying nothing of Isabelle's engagement, and when Arthur's real name appeared among those of the passengers by the November mail, Mrs. Vernon's friends decided in solemn conclave, that she must be very much disappointed in having missed the opportunity of getting one of her daughters married, but the mere fact of her encouraging a young man to be so much at her house made her motive so plain, that no doubt Mr. Carleton became disgusted, and was glad to get away.

That little incident sealed the fate of the Vernons; their star was no longer in the ascendant.

Poor Mrs. Vernon! she knew nothing, and would have cared less, supposing that to be possible, if she had known of the edict pronounced against her, and when the visits of those who were the first to call upon her ceased, it was a matter of such perfect indifference to her that she did not even think about it, or if she had, she would have simply supposed that their time was otherwise occupied.

Harry was leaning against the doorway, watching the occasional desperate efforts of those who were engaged in a gallop to steer clear of a catastrophe which often appeared imminent by reason of the numbers engaged in the charge, when his attention was arrested by the words:—

"I don't care who they are or who they visit, the women settle those things for themselves, but not for

me ; I do as I like. She is the prettiest girl in the room."

"Except her sister," was the reply, in a voice which Harry recognised as Mr. Winter's.

"Without any exception," said the first speaker. "She is brilliant, original ; her bright looks are bewitching."

"Very haughty sometimes," said Mr. Winter, "and as cold as ice."

"When you were talking nonsense, Winter. A good sailor looks out for squalls in some latitudes. I should be rather careful what I said to a girl with that—what shall I call it ? that grand, careless manner ; she half repels and half invites attention. I have managed to get into the same set twice and have been watching her for the last hour."

"Very complimentary to your partners," said Mr. Winter.

"Very, if they knew it ; but, I say, Winter, can't you get me an introduction ?"

"I'll introduce you to her brother, if you like."

"Why not to her ? I saw you speaking to her."

"Yes ; but I don't know how she would take an introduction from me. I know scarcely anything of them, except Vernon, who is in our office."

Harry was moving away as soon as he heard his own name, when a startling exclamation of "Oh ! moy !" and the confusion that followed two couples measuring their length upon the floor, caused him to advance a step or two into the room, and for the moment he so entirely forgot the conversation he had just heard, that he did not turn his eyes in the direction from which the voices of the speakers issued to ascertain who one of them was. The dancers recovered themselves in a moment ; they fell, rose up,

and were off, before anyone had time to wonder whether anyone was hurt, a fact that was notified to Harry by a rather stentorian voice close to him exclaiming, "Right you are!"

Harry signally failed in maintaining an appearance of indifference, and his face wore an expression of undisguised fun and merriment as he turned to look at the last speaker.

A coarse, but good-humoured, jovial face was before him, and a figure on which evening dress seemed to sit very uneasily, made Harry think of the old proverb, "A place for everything and everything in its place."

"Well, I never! I shouldn't like to see our Maria Jane go and do like that," revealed to Harry the fair speaker of those euphonious words, "Oh, moy!" and as he listened to and looked at the mother of Maria Jane, he thought that very curious specimens in the natural history department were to be met with in high places in that particular portion of the earth's surface to which geographers had given the name of Australia.

The mother of Maria Jane was short and stout, and highly polished; soap must have been used *ad libitum*, and the effect was marvellous. Harry could not tell whether she had any sleeves to her dress; he rather thought not, when he was describing her appearance to Isabelle as they drove home; but he was quite sure that her gloves, which did not reach her wrists and could not be buttoned, were several sizes larger than his own. The mother of Maria Jane continued to watch the dancers, and comment upon them, all unconscious of the indelible impression she had made on the mind of Harry, who turned away lest he should become too demonstrative.

"Are you a geologist?" said an elderly gentleman, who had been standing close to Harry, and had heard and seen all that passed.

"No; at least, not much of one. Why do you ask?" said Harry.

"I thought—excuse the remark—I thought you looked as if you had hitherto studied only what may have come under your notice in an older country than this, and were not prepared for the singular specimens which are met with in the recent alluvial deposits that exist here and excite the astonishment of strangers."

"I have been in Australia for some years," replied Harry, who began to see the drift of the stranger's remarks, "but I have had few opportunities of studying the different strata. The primary formation has interested me most; the secondary is not well developed, only crops out here and there; the newer tertiary is the grand field for observation."

"'Right you are,' " to borrow the expression of one of our members of parliament. It abounds in fine specimens of a very extraordinary character; the more you study them the more wonderful they appear. They belong almost exclusively to the mushroom family, and the properties which characterise that class are considered by competent judges to be remarkably developed."

"Do you recommend a study of these phenomena to the young?" said Harry.

"Not too close a one; it is much easier to get one's garments spotted in this life than to keep them white."

The old man turned away as he spoke, and Harry did not encounter him again.

Mrs. Vernon thought the evening rather long; she

did not know many of those who were present, and they were engaged in dancing. On looking up from a book of photographs, which had interested her for a little while, she saw Mrs. Lofty seated alone on a sofa. She knew that Mrs. Lofty was not generally liked, and she crossed the room and sat down by her, making some common-place remark as she did so. To Mrs. Vernon's intense astonishment, she received a cool reply, and then Mrs. Lofty rose and walked to the other side of the room. The rudeness was unmistakable, and Mrs. Vernon was too much surprised to smile, as she might have done if Harry had been there to make one of his satirical remarks on colonial manners. She little dreamed that Mrs. Lofty thought that the dignity of Lady Arrogate's sister would be fearfully compromised if she were seen conversing with the unknown Mrs. Vernon at Government House ; nor did Mrs. Lofty know what opinion two or three who saw the little drama, and, from a knowledge of her character, were able to look below the surface and read the thoughts which caused her flight, formed of her principles and her manners. The old naval officer, who asked Harry if he were a geologist, understood it in a moment, and muttered something between his teeth about "a beggar on horseback," to the no small astonishment of a few individuals who happened to hear him, but failed to see the application.

Mrs. Vernon's calmness was quite unruffled by Mrs. Lofty's precipitate flight ; she was beyond the reach of anything Mrs. Lofty could do, and after remaining in her rather conspicuous position for a short time, she rose, and, with the same quiet ease with which she crossed her own apartment, she walked to the other end of the room, and was about to leave it,

when Lady Digby, who, surrounded by some of her own friends, was standing near a piano, said they were going to have a little music, and asked Mrs. Vernon to remain. There Harry found her when he and Isabelle came in to ask when she would like to leave.

"Edith wants to stay for the 'Lancers,' if you are not tired," Harry said.

"And someone else would like to stay too, I suspect."

"I don't care, if you wish to go now," was Harry's reply.

"Half an hour will make very little difference," said Mrs. Vernon; "go and enjoy yourself a little longer."

"Do you not dance again, dear?" as Isabelle sat down on an ottoman.

"No, mamma."

She spoke decidedly, and Harry looked at her so mischievously as he moved away, that Mrs. Vernon thought it better to ask no more questions then.

"Well, Isa, how did you enjoy your last quadrille?" were Harry's first words as they drove off.

"What made you do it?" said Edith.

"I could not help it."

"I would have declined dancing again; I would rather sit down a whole evening," continued Edith.

"So would I," said Isabelle.

"Then I do not understand it," replied Edith, leaning back and drawing her shawl round her.

"No," said Harry; "you will never allow yourself to be caught in that way."

"What are you talking about?" enquired Mrs. Vernon.

"Beauty and the Beast."

"Don't laugh about it, Harry," said Isabelle.

"You don't think it a laughing matter, eh?"

"I did not at the time. Mamma, do you think it possible that anyone can be so fond of dancing as to enjoy it with a positively disagreeable partner?"

"I can only answer for myself, Isa; I never did. Who was your last partner?"

"Mr. Hackett."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Vernon, in a relieved tone, for she was beginning to be afraid that something very disagreeable had occurred.

"There," exclaimed Harry, breaking out into his merry laugh, "mamma thinks it is not so bad after all."

"He is a quiet, inoffensive, good sort of man, I believe, though not a very suitable or agreeable partner for either of your sisters."

"Especially after drinking champagne."

"Harry! I should have thought—"

"Don't finish that sentence, mamma. I shall always take care of my sisters," said Harry, speaking warmly. Then in a different tone, "I beg your pardon, it was my own fault. You could not think anything else from what I said; but all I meant was, that at that time he had only taken enough to raise his spirits, and he was not as quiet as he was when you saw him at Morton park."

"I do not understand," said Mrs. Vernon, "how he came to ask you to dance; you were not introduced to him in any way at Morton!"

"Oh, no, it happened in this way," said Isabelle. "I was sitting down not far from Mrs. Dashwood, who was talking to Mr. Hackett. Harry, who was standing at the back of my chair, said something that carried my thoughts away from Australia, and



I suppose, just at that moment, Mrs. Dashwood noticed that fresh sets were forming, and in her loud, abrupt way, she mentioned my name, and asked me 'if I had got a partner for the next dance.'"

"And the word 'no' fell from your lips as coldly as the water falls in the Knaresborough cave," said Harry, "but without producing any effect on Mrs. Dashwood, for she said in a louder tone than before, as if for the mere sake of saying something, 'Don't you mean to dance again to-night?'"

"And then," added Isabelle, "I was foolish enough to say, 'yes, I do mean to dance again.' It was a momentary feeling of annoyance at the loud, direct questions that stirred up the spirit of opposition, I suppose, and I was punished for it."

"By Mr. Hackett requesting to be allowed the pleasure," said Harry.

"I see now," exclaimed Edith. "Isa had said she was not engaged, and then that she intended to dance again. Why did you not say to Mr. Hackett, just in your own natural way, 'I am not going to dance this time?'"

"I did not think of that?"

"I told you Edith would not be caught," said Harry.

"It is no use thinking any more about it, Harry; we shall go home soon, and then I shall be able to laugh at what has annoyed me now."

Letters had been received from Arthur in April. He had missed the previous mail through some accident to the steamer, which did not arrive until a few hours after the out-going mail had started. He had, therefore, been a month with his uncle when he wrote. The reception he met with was gathered from the regret he expressed that he had not known

his uncle better and returned to him sooner, than from any direct reference to the subject. Sir John was delighted to hear of his nephew's engagement to Isabelle, and at first grumbled very much that Arthur had not brought a wife with him, to cheer, as he said, his last days. There was no imminent danger of any sudden change ; he may live, Arthur wrote, for many months, or the augmentation of some symptoms would terminate fatally in a few days. He sent a message to Mrs. Vernon, begging her to return without waiting for Arthur to fetch Isabelle, and Arthur urged Harry not to stay in Australia.

"He need not do that, as if it were a matter of choice," Harry said, when alone with Mrs. Vernon. "The fact is I don't want to stay, and I don't like now to be in a hurry to go."

"You have exactly described my own feelings, Harry."

"Have I ? then I am right. It makes no difference that Arthur is what a fellow ought to be, and that I know he will be only too glad to have Isa on any terms, I am in no hurry to give her up to anyone, though I have not our old home for her to live in, and I want everyone to understand that."

"Have you said so to Isabelle ?"

"No ; but I fancy I shall be safe if I say that I will do what she likes about going at once or waiting to see what news the next two or three mails bring."

"I think you would ; and as regards yourself, dear Harry, a few months either way will make no difference."

The May mail brought no news of any importance. Sir John was much the same, and desired Arthur to say that he was beginning to look forward to seeing them, as he hoped they had acceded to his last request.

Mrs. Vernon almost repented of the decision that had been made, when she read a special message to Isabelle, which had the effect of making them all feel that no fastidious sensibility ought to stand in the way of gratifying Sir John's wishes. They would wait for the June mail, and leave in a vessel that was to sail about the end of the month, unless circumstances rendered it necessary to incur the additional expense, which Mrs. Vernon could not very well afford to do, of going by the mail steamer.

A fortnight had elapsed since the ball, and Isabelle and Edith had been busily engaged each day in preparing for the long voyage. Very different were their feelings, as Isabelle remembered well, from those with which the arrangements were made for the voyage to Australia. Then there was the severing of home ties and cherished associations, leaving the scenes of childhood, taking the last look of old friends, and hearing the lingering, reluctant good-bye; the going forth to a far distant land where all was strange, unknown, and visionary. Now they were leaving a foreign country for their own native land; there was joy and rest in the thought. Remembrances of bygone days, over which time and absence had cast a veil, became more distinct; visions of green lawns and shrubberies, mossy banks, sparkling running streams, and the varied foliage of England's trees rose before them.

"Is it wrong to be so very glad to leave Australia?" said Isabelle, as she stood under the verandah with Mrs. Vernon, looking at the streak of light which marked the sun's path before he sank below the horizon.

"What made you ask?"

Isabelle pointed to the evening star, glittering in solitary beauty.

"I thought of those words, 'The earth is the Lord's,' and 'He made the stars also,' and then I wondered whether this great gladness was a proof that I had been dissatisfied all these years with what God appointed, and looking at that far-off light in the sky made me feel as if I had been ungrateful."

"We cannot help murmuring in spirit," said Mrs. Vernon, "it is natural to our present imperfect state, and God knows it and pities our weakness, and almost excuses us when He caused the gracious words to be written, 'No chastisement for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous.' What we have to do, is to strive against murmuring, and for entire submission to His will. If we have not rebelled when the storm was raging, we may rejoice and be glad to see the bow of promise."

"I am glad to hear you say that, mamma, for I cannot tell you how glad I feel sometimes at the mere thought of being in England again."

"I might say the same, Isa. When we first came to Australia, my daily prayer was that we might be restored to our own land; then I left that, and prayed for submission, full and entire, to the Divine will. I think now that is the safest prayer; if we ask for special gifts or graces, or for temporal blessings, we very often pray for that from which we shrink afterwards."

"How do you mean, mamma?"

"In the one case, when we pray for spiritual gifts, we bring upon us those trials which are the means of producing good in us; and when we pray for temporal blessings, we have, with the bestowal of them, the temptations which always accompany them.

With the evidence, which the Sacrifice on the Cross gives us, of God's love, the most perfect and acceptable prayer seems to me to be, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'"

The English mail had been due two or three days, and each evening Harry's return from town was anxiously looked for. At last he was seen approaching the house, with rapid strides, several hours earlier than he usually left his office. Mrs. Vernon met him at the door, when without speaking, he placed a large official-looking envelope deeply bordered with black, in her hand. She raised her eyes to his face.

"He is dead," fell slowly from Harry's lips.

"Sir John Carleton?"

"Yes."

"This is not Arthur's writing."

"No, it is from Sir John's lawyer. Where is Isabelle?"

"She was here a few minutes ago; you have a letter for her, I suppose?"

"Yes, I have something like half-a-dozen somewhere; but read that, mamma."

Mrs. Vernon opened the paper she held in her hand.

"Oh, Harry! dear, kind Sir John; how much I wish we had gone when Arthur did."

"So do I now."

"It would be such a relief to thank him."

"I can scarcely believe it," said Harry.

"You can scarcely believe what?" said Edith, as she entered the room; then catching sight of the letters, she called to Isabelle to make haste, "the English mail was in."

"What is the matter, mamma?" and as Edith asked the question she looked from one to the other.

"Sir John Carleton is dead," said Harry, "and—" he stopped short, as if he could not finish the sentence, and just then Isabelle joined them.

"That is not all, I am sure," said Edith, "I know it is not by Harry's manner."

"No, it is not all; but Harry cannot realize it yet. The Hermitage is his own."

Those words and the black-edged envelope addressed to herself, revealed to Isabelle what had occurred. She stood for a moment looking at her letter without making any attempt to open it; then she went up to Harry, and putting her arm round his neck, said,—

"I am so glad for your sake."

Tears came with the words, and Harry felt his own eyes fill.

"You would have lived there yourself, but for this," he said.

"No, never; Arthur had settled that, only he told me not to let you know, that he intended asking you to take care of it and to live there for him; he said his mother's wish must be held sacred and he should live at Llanarmon himself; this is much better, he would not mind my telling you now."

The Hermitage and all it contained, with the exception of the plate belonging to the Carleton family and Lady Carleton's jewels, were left to Harry, and ten thousand pounds in addition. To Mrs. Vernon, "the widow of his earliest and most valued friend," two thousand pounds, and Lady Carleton's carriage and horses. The remainder of his property went to his nephew.

It was a grave kind of happiness that manifested itself in each that evening, which they gave up entirely to thoughts of the past and of the future,

and to talking over the arrangements which must now be hurried on, to enable them to leave by the next mail. One of Mrs. Vernon's difficulties had been not knowing what to do with her faithful servant. Mrs. Brown had no relatives in Australia, and she had become so much attached to the family with which she had lived since her husband's death, that she had occupied a considerable portion of each day in lamenting over the fact that Mrs. Vernon had announced when she first mentioned their intention to go to England, viz., that she could not afford to take her with them. Now, however, the case was altered, and Mrs. Brown was made happy by being told to get ready to accompany them.

Heavy clouds hung over the the sea as the "Atalanta" steamed down St. Vincent's Gulf, bearing Mrs. Vernon and her children away from the shores of Australia for ever. "Homeward bound," was the thought of each heart. "Beyond the clouds was the bright sun shining."





CHAPTER XXXV.

“



ADY Carleton's rug, sir," said a servant, handing one in at the door of a railway carriage, on a fine, bright day in December. The train started.

"Shall you be able to keep yourself warm?" said Arthur, as he wrapped the fur round Isabelle.

"Oh, yes; I cannot even think about the cold."

"Mamma?" said Arthur.

"Yes, mamma," she answered, with a very bright look, "and Harry, and Edith, and home."

"I thought you had just left that."

"My new home."

"Which you have not yet learned to like so well as the old one, eh, Isabelle?"

"It is yours," she replied, laying her hand on Arthur's.

"And does that make up for the absence of other things?"

"You know without my telling you; but, do look, Arthur, at that new-fallen snow. I had almost forgotten how beautiful it is."

"It does not give you a chill to look at snow;" said Arthur, amused at her enthusiasm.

"Nothing would give me a chill to-day."

"Not even my telling you that we must go back to Australia?"

"That is not likely to happen."

"I suppose not. I never asked you how you felt when your foot first touched English ground."

"I felt that I should like to kneel down and thank God for bringing us home. How did you feel, Arthur?"

"I hardly know, unless I say that I felt I was an Englishman in the right place."

At the first station a commercial traveller opened the door and stepped in. After placing two small leather cases on the seat opposite to him, he loosened a woollen comforter that was tied round his neck, put on a cloth cap, rubbed his hands, and proceeded, as is usual in such cases, to remark that "it was fine Christmas weather."

"Yes," replied Arthur, "and the snow that fell during the night came just in time; boys like to have some snowballing at Christmas."

"The young rascals!" exclaimed the commercial traveller, in an irate tone; "they like anything that is mischievous."

"It is natural," said Arthur, who was thinking more of his boyish days than of his fellow traveller.

"It may be, but nature's freaks are not always agreeable. I had a snowball in my ear, sir, this morning; it tingles still. If I could have caught the young scamp, I would have made him remember that demonstration of his natural propensities, in spite of his greeting. Would you believe it, sir, he actually called out, as he took to his heels round a corner, 'A merry Christmas to you.'"

"It was adding insult to injury," said Arthur, as gravely as he could manage to speak at that moment.

"I don't know what the rising generation will

come to; something bad, as sure as my name is Tom Watson."

"You are speaking of the rising generation in this part of the world," rejoined Arthur. "The young people appear to me to be very slow compared with those whose manners and habits I have had opportunities of observing during the last few years."

"May I ask what country you have been unfortunate enough to live in?"

"Australia."

"Indeed! Not South Australia?"

"Yes; South Australia."

"Then perhaps you know Mr. Watson of Adelaide. He is head of a large establishment; agent for several wealthy sheep farmers; and a justice of the peace."

"Yes, I know him well by reputation; everyone knows him."

"So I suppose; so I should imagine. George is a great man now. You don't know him personally, sir?"

"Slightly," replied Arthur. "I have met him occasionally at Government House, and two or three times on business matters just before I left the colony."

"He never says anything about coming to live in the old country again; at least not to me. He is a relation of mine."

"He is a very useful and important member of society in Adelaide," said Arthur, "and, I should think, is very likely to feel that Australia is his country now."

"Ah! that is always the way; he has been very fortunate in life. I don't suppose he would care to

come back to those he left behind. Do you know his wife, sir?"

"I can scarcely say I know her. I have seen her several times, and spoken to her once."

"She is rather a grand lady, I expect."

"I thought her very agreeable and ladylike," said Arthur; "her father I know very well. It is a pity he cannot come back to his own land; but probably he could not stand this climate, he is an old man."

Mr. Tom Watson got out at the next station, and Arthur said,—

"I have some recollection of Harry once saying something about that Mr. Watson, of Adelaide."

"Very likely," replied Isabelle. "Harry called upon him, when we arrived in the colony, with a letter of introduction, and mamma and Mrs. Watson exchanged calls before we went to Kooroona. Harry used to say that 'it was not likely that the Watsons could be expected to visit poor emigrants.' You know how satirically he speaks sometimes."

"And they did not call upon you when you lived at Morton?"

"No, mamma expected them to do so. I suppose they had some reason for not wishing to be acquainted with us. Mamma was quite indifferent whether they called or not."

"If George Watson, Esq., J.P., &c., &c., &c., of Adelaide, were a clairvoyant!" said Arthur, laughing.

"And could know of this meeting in a railway carriage!" said Isabelle. "What do you suppose would be the result?"

"A momentary collapse of colonial dignity and all that sort of thing," replied Arthur.

A few hours later, and Isabelle, with one arm round Harry's neck, was exclaiming,—

"Oh, Harry! the dear old home at Christmas."

"Aye, snow on the ground and hoar frost on the trees, and no end of holly and mistletoe. I don't believe Edie would object to anyone taking her under the bough in the hall."

"Come along, Edith," said Arthur; "let me be the first."

"Christmas Eve has not come yet," she replied.

"Oh; and a kiss under the mistletoe is not orthodox till then. I shall remember when the time comes. Do you like this better than Christmas in Australia?"

"Except the Church Service, nothing was like Christmas there," said Edith. "Come, Isa, I want you in our old schoolroom."

"To reduce confusion to order, I suppose," exclaimed Harry. "When I looked in an hour ago, you reminded me of some wild animal in its den."

Branches of laurel and mistletoe, ivy, laurustinus, and dark green holly, with its bright red berries, were scattered in profusion about the floor.

"Look, Isa; this wreath is for papa's portrait."

"Oh, I wish you had not finished it."

"That you may help me? I did think about it, but I knew we should not have much time to spare. You can help to place it; and then, the other—I have left a little bit of that unfinished."

"The cross?"

"Yes, here it is. Do you like it?"

"Very much. Has mamma seen it?"

"No, and she knows nothing about it. I asked

her not to come here to-day. How fortunate that it is moonlight !”

“Very. Oh, Edie, how nice it is to be at home again ! I could almost fancy the last few years a long dream.”

“And being married the last part of it ?” said Edith.

“No, that is a reality, unless Arthur is a shadow.”

“Rather a substantial one,” said a voice behind them, and turning, they saw Arthur standing in the doorway.

“May I come in ?” he enquired.

“If you will be careful where you step,” said Edith, laughing.

“Take care, Arthur,” exclaimed Isabelle ; “you have caught your foot in one of Edie’s festoons.”

“I shall beat a retreat I think, unless I can be of some use.”

“You can be if you like,” said Edith. “Harry is going to put up these in the hall. He said this morning, ‘the old place shall be dressed for Christmas by its master.’”

“Very good,” said Arthur, “when are we to begin ?”

“Not till after dinner.”

“And when will mamma like to go, Edie ?”

“To be there by twelve o’clock, when the bells begin to ring. Harry and I will start a little before, and then the cross will be there. You and Arthur can come with mamma, but don’t tell her why we are gone on.”

“Shall I fetch your wreath, Isabelle ?” said Arthur.

“Thank you. You have made a Greek cross, I see,” she said to Edith.

"Yes; I thought, when you came, we would make a circle to place on it, the emblem of eternity, you know."

Isabelle smiled and kissed her sister, as she said,—

"We thought of the same thing then. I have made a wreath of white everlastings, to place on your green cross of ivy and holly."

"That is perfect," said Isabelle, as, taking the wreath from Arthur, she laid it on the cross. "Eternity, immortality, love, faithfulness, and obedience unto death, all typified there."

"Are you wrapped up well?" said Arthur, as he stood with Isabelle in the hall, waiting for Mrs. Vernon, a little before midnight.

"No amount of cold could penetrate this fur jacket and my snow boots. You need not be afraid that I shall take cold. I have not told you, Arthur, why we all thought we should like to visit papa's grave to-night. The last Christmas Eve that we were here papa was with us, and the door was thrown wide open to let Christmas in, as old country people say; and then we stood and listened to the church bells. Before Christmas came round again we were in Australia; now—"

"Now," interrupted Arthur, "you are back in England, and are my dear wife."

"Where are Edith and Harry?" said Mrs. Vernon, as she joined them.

"They have walked on, mamma."

There was only a thin covering of snow on the ground and it was hard and crisp under their feet. The moon and stars were shining brightly above them and shewed the old church tower rising among the elm trees that grew around it. Not far

from the east end of the church was a stone cross, marking the spot where all that could die of a good man had been laid till the morning of the Resurrection. On either side of it stood Edith and Harry, when the others came up; and on the stone was suspended the cross of holly and ivy, with the wreath of everlastings. Mrs. Vernon looked at it and smiled as she said,—

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“Mamma,” said Isabelle, putting her arm round her mother, “you remind me of the words, ‘sorrow and mourning shall flee away.’”

“I am too thankful to be here to-night, dear, to be sad. After the years of absence,—the longing to be near this spot, the certainty that now I shall rest here too,—I seem to have no feelings, at this moment, but those of love and gratitude.”

“Do you think papa knows we are here?” said Edith.

“Why should we doubt it? The spirits of the departed are not in a state of unconsciousness, they are resting from their labours till the number of the redeemed is made up, and while resting, they sing the praises of God and pray for those they have left behind on the battle field of the world.”

“It does not seem to me now as if we were really separated from papa,” said Isabelle. “At a time like this I could almost fancy we are with him.”

“The separation has only to do with time and sense, Isa.”

“It would be pleasant to know that he is looking down upon us now,” said Edith.

“Yes, dear; but our life here is imperfect, and we see through a glass darkly. One thing is certain: we are not told that the departed do *not* see us, and

we do know that they pray for us, and that angel messengers are continually ascending and descending on errands of love and mercy. We know, too, that the saints live in the light of God, and 'know as they are known.' We can place no limit to their power in any way."

Just as Mrs. Vernon spoke the last words, the deep-toned bell announced the hour of twelve. She counted the strokes, and as the last sounded, she exclaimed, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." At the same moment, the air was filled with the music of the bells in the old ivy-clad tower,—a music that goes straight to the heart of every true-hearted Briton, warms it, and makes it feel young again, in spite of the hoary head and the snows of winter. They listened for a few minutes to the joyous peal, and then Isabelle's clear voice led the Christmas Hymn.

. Hark ! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King,
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled.
Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies ;
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark ! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Veiled in Flesh the Godhead see,
Hail, the Incarnate Deity !
Pleased as man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark ! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

Hail, the heaven-born Prince of Peace !
Hail, the Sun of Righteousness !
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark ! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

"Now, mamma," said Harry, as he drew her hand within his arm, "you must come home ; you have been standing long enough in the snow."

They walked on in silence for a little while, then Mrs. Vernon said, "I have realized to-night that I have reached that point in the journey of life to which, I suppose, all attain sooner or later."

"What point is that?"

"When the future is more thought of than the past. Once the predominant feeling was that I was travelling away from the past, now it is that I am pressing rapidly onwards to the future."

"You do not want to leave us, mamma?" said Harry.

"No ; only, Harry, I am at rest, as it were,—waiting in a pleasant place, with all of you near me, till my work is done. You know, when you undertake anything, how easily and quickly the last half of the task, whatever it may be, seems to be accomplished, compared with the first half."

"It was so, I remember, with our voyage home."

"Yes, when we crossed the line, and knew that we were in the northern hemisphere again, we felt we were nearing home ; the southern hemisphere was left behind, and many of its stars disappeared night after night, and we turned our eyes to the

north to look for others. So it is with me now. When we left England, I was leaving the past and my husband's grave, and was travelling away from youth; now, I am advancing towards age with a bright evening sunset before me, and the certainty that the shadow of your father's cross will fall upon my grave as well as upon his,—beyond, a future without clouds and without end."

Soon after the Vernons arrived in England they spent three weeks at Elmwood Castle. Alfred was at home, and Arthur joined them during the last week of their stay. A very happy three weeks those were to all, though, at the end of them, Edith said to Isabelle, that "she did not understand Alfred at all."

"He is just what I expected him to be," was Isabelle's reply. "What is it you do not understand?"

"I cannot explain. I hardly know now I think about it."

"After the first few days, I thought you seemed cool in your manner to him, Edie. I do not mean always, but sometimes."

"Perhaps I was, very likely, though I did not intend to be," said Edith. "His manner was generally so different from what his letters were; he is an iceberg sometimes."

"I never experienced a chill from being near him."

"No, he was different to you."

"So I thought myself," said Isabelle, with a smile, which Edith did not see, and nothing more was said.

Mr. and Mrs. Graham and Alfred stayed a fortnight at the Hermitage after Isabelle's marriage,

and Edith's thoughts were so much occupied with the parting from her sister, that she forgot Alfred's coldness ; indeed, she one day found herself wondering whether she had been mistaken at Elmwood in thinking him an iceberg. At their first interview, she had met him as if Time had wrought no changes, and as if neither of them had grown older since they parted in Australia ; but she was soon reminded of the fact, by Alfred's manner, and then a little restraint became visible on her part, which Alfred thought was intended to check him, and he became reserved. He had often tried to picture Edith to himself, as no longer the child who had so long been the idol of his imagination, when he knew that he should soon see her again ; but he was unprepared for the change that had really taken place, and her child-like naiveté one moment, and half-repellant and dignified manner the next, puzzled while it attracted him. At the Hermitage a change was visible in both ; they were themselves again, and Alfred's last words to her, on leaving to return to Elmwood, were, " The last day of the year."

That time had come, and Isabelle and Edith stood together at one of the windows watching for the return of the carriage which had been sent to the railway station to meet the Grahams.

" What are you thinking about ?" said Edith, breaking a rather long silence.

" This time last year."

" And that makes you look happy ?"

" No ; but the present contrast does. I remember hearing the remark made, that it was worth while to be caught in a storm sometimes for the sake of knowing what a luxury dry clothes were.

Those who work the hardest must enjoy rest more than others can understand."

"And you think that you appreciate England more than anyone can do who has never been in exile?" said Edith.

"I do; I am sure of it. You can trace the same law everywhere and in everything; what is wrong makes us think more of what is right. I am almost sure that I should not have thought so much of Alfred's deference, and entire obedience to the wishes of his vicar, if we had not heard and seen how the clergy in Australia disregard all rule and authority."


"Alfred says every member of the Church has taken the vow of obedience, whether they know it or not. In the case of lay members, he thinks the majority of them break their vows ignorantly,—they are not properly taught, and so their sin is not so great as that of the priests, who, in addition to the vows that are binding upon all, have taken other special ones of obedience."

"Edie, do you remember what mamma said the last day I was at home?"

"About what?"

"Obedience. What Alfred said to you reminded me of it. Mamma said that whatever work we undertook in these days should have for its chief object the inculcation of the principle of obedience and submission. I have been thinking about it since, and if I am ever able I should like to establish a Sisterhood. The Sisters work by rule and under authority, and their example would very likely effect as much good as what they do."

"Did you ever say anything about that to Arthur?"



"Yes, we were talking about it one day. Why do you ask?"

"I heard him asking mamma some questions about a House of Mercy on Christmas Day. Hark! Yes,—there is the carriage." and Edith ran to the hall door and threw it open.

"Ah! we look like Christmas," said Mr. Graham, glancing round the old hall.

"Don't we? If you had only been here," said Edith, "it would have been perfect."

"What, Christmas Eve? You had time to think of us, then?"

"Yes."

"Well, I believe we all thought of you. I make it a point never to be away from Elmwood at Christmas, or I should have brought Kate to the Hermitage; but the old people would not like their roast beef and plum pudding half as well if I did not carve for them."

"If one could only be in two places at once!" said Isabelle.

"No one can," so Paddy says, "barring a bird," rejoined Mr. Graham. "I suppose that remark means that you would have liked to be at Llanarmon as well as here. How is Sir Arthur?"

"Quite well. I thought he would have been back before you arrived. He rode into town on some special business; he said there might be a mistake if he did not go himself."

They were all assembled in the drawing-room when Arthur returned, and Isabelle was wondering what could have detained him so late, when, after a hasty toilette, he entered the room with a roll under his arm, which he laid aside without any remark, nor did anyone think of it again, until the

windows were thrown open that the Church bells, ringing the old year out and the new one in, may be heard more clearly, and then Arthur gave it to Isabelle, saying,—

“There, Lady Carleton, you think so lightly of what most ladies think most of, that, but for a conversation we had some time ago, I should have been puzzled to know what I could give you, as a new year’s gift, that you would care to receive.”

“Oh, Arthur ! I prize everything you give me.”

“For the sake of the giver, Isa ; but I wanted,” he continued, “to give you something you would like for itself,—something that would be of use, and in which you would always take an interest. Won’t you look at it ?”

She undid the roll. There was a very lawyer-like looking document, and the ground plan and elevation of a building, the arched windows and doorways giving it an ecclesiastical appearance ; also a blank cheque. Isabelle looked up.

“That,” said Arthur, pointing to the cheque, “is for you to fill in when you know how much will be required, and the deed gives you a title to the land on which to build your House of Mercy. How do you like the plan ?”

“Arthur,” she replied, gravely, “I cannot thank you enough.”

“That is done already,” he said, lightly, “if looks mean anything.”

The plans were examined and approved, and before the new year was an hour old, it was settled that the approval of the bishop, and of the clergyman in whose parish the land was situate, should be applied for in the first instance, that Isabelle should lay the foundation stone, and that the work

should be prosecuted with all possible despatch, so that the vision of the first hour of the new year may, when its last hour closed, have become a substantial reality.

Towards the end of October that same year, the young curate of Elmwood, who had been occupied all day in attending to parish duties, walked quickly across the park. The red sun was still a little way above the horizon, and its rays fell full upon the strong walls and towers of his home. When within a short distance of the castle, he saw a young figure leaning against the trunk of an old oak. The face was turned from him, and so intent was the mind upon some object, that Alfred's footsteps on the short turf were not heard.

"Looking at your home, Edith," he said, as he came up, and, leaning forward, saw her eyes fixed upon the old pile of building before them.

"Yes, I was admiring the eagle's nest."

"Why do you call it that?"

"Have you forgotten? Ah, I see you have."

"Forgotten what?"

"Something that was said long ago in Australia. How strange it is!"

"Tell me what you mean," he said, as they walked on together.

"Do you remember? Yes, you must remember that,—the morning the news came which took you home."

"Well!"

"Harry said something about your living in an eagle's nest. I forget what else was said; I do not think I understood anything about it; but I recollect asking you, if I perched on the edge of your nest, would you take me in? Harry was angry

with me for saying that, which, I suppose, made me remember it."

"And now you are in the eagle's nest. I thought you were about taking wing, and that I should lose you, when I asked you to share the nest with me."

"Eagles prey upon smaller birds, you know."

"Was that the reason you looked like a startled deer?" said Alfred, laughing.

"No, I did not think of it; I was surprised."

"And, as you confessed, had not thought of leaving mamma."

"Dear mamma! I am very happy, Alfred; but I want to see them all again. I long for new year's day, when Isabelle's House of Mercy will be opened by the bishop; then we shall be altogether again."

"Oh! Edie, I have something to shew you; I cannot think how we missed it. I must send this paper to Harry."

As he spoke, he drew out of his pocket an Australian newspaper, and read,—

Some of our readers will probably remember the trial of an aboriginal, named Wahreep, for the murder of a white man. It excited considerable interest at the time, and we gave a full report in our columns. A bushman, who arrived in Adelaide last week, has made a singular disclosure. A man went to his hut one day apparently ill, grew rapidly worse and died, but not till he had made a full confession of a murder, which he had committed some time before, not far from Kooroona. He said he was a convict, that he had been many years in Western Australia, obtained a ticket-of-leave, and came to Adelaide. He went northwards, intending to get employment as a shepherd, and when he got near Kooroona he met a man with whom he had some conversation. While they were talking, the man took out his handkerchief and some bank notes were drawn out of the pocket

with it. He said he believed it was the devil who put it into his head to rob the man ; there was a desperate struggle and then he killed him. He found soon after that the chain attached to the watch was broken, and thinking that part of it may have been left in the waistcoat, he threw the other end away to save himself and cast suspicion on some other who might chance to find it. This confession clears up the mystery.





WORKS PUBLISHED BY
A. R. MOWBRAY & CO.,

116, *S. ALDATE STREET, OXFORD;*

LONDON:

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO.

Just published, Fcap 8vo., Price 3/6, by Post 3/9,

ÆMILIUS :

**A TALE OF THE DECIAN AND VALERIAN
PERSECUTIONS.**

By the Rev. A. D. CRAKE, B.A., Chaplain of All
Saints' School, Bloxham.

THE BREAD OF LIFE. A Manual of Instruction and Devotion for the Blessed Sacrament. Second Edition, 1s.; bevelled boards, gilt, 2/; uniform with "Simple Prayers for Schoolboys." The same adapted for girls, 1/ and 2/.

SIMPLE PRAYERS. A Manual of Instruction and Devotion for School Boys. Second Edition, enlarged. Limp cloth, 1/; bevelled boards, 2/. Uniform with "The Bread of Life."

PRIME, SEXT, AND COMPLINE; with Special Antiphons and Collects for various Seasons. Uniform with "The Bread of Life," suitable for Families and Guilds. Price 4d.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

DEFENCE OF CHURCH PRINCIPLES. Ten Lectures by various Clergyman, delivered at Ipswich and Norwich in 1863 and 1864. Seventh Thousand. Paper covers, 1/; cloth, 1/6.

FLORAL DECORATIONS. A Handy Book of Illustrations and Suggestions. 1/. Third Edition.

MEDITATIONS ON THE EUCHARIST. By Mgr. de la Bouillerie, Bishop of Carcassonne. Translated from the French, 34th Edition. 1/6.

ESPOUSALS OF S. DOROTHEA, and other Poems. By the Rev. GERARD MOULTRIE. 2/6.

PLAIN CHURCH TEACHING, or Week-day Readings on the Collect, Epistle, and Gospel for each Sunday and Festival throughout the Year. Three Vols., 7/6,

THE GOSPELLER,

A Broadsheet for distribution among the Poor, in Large Type and easy reading.

Published Monthly Price One Halfpenny.

THE GOSPELLER addresses those who want plain teaching in religion, not only the more earnest of our people, but very many who, apparently godless, are ready to receive a word of warning and guidance.

THE GOSPELLER upholds the Catholic teaching of the Church of England with firmness and charity.

Notices by the Press :

"There ought not to be a single parish to which the Catholic revival has penetrated in which 'The Gospeller' is not largely circulated : we know of nothing that can supply its place."—*Church Review*.

"'The Gospeller' deserves hearty commendation. It is a monthly publication, in shape like a newspaper, in good bold type, done with sound but earnest devotion, and thoroughly Church. It will meet the case of poor people exceedingly well."—*Guardian*.







